AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET

ISAIAH.

Prophecy is a title that sounds very great to those who understand it, though, in the eye of the world, many of those who were dignified with it, appeared very mean. A prophet is one who has a great intimacy with Heaven, and a great interest there, and, consequently, a commanding authority upon earth. Prophecy is put for all divine revelation, (2 Pet. i. 20, 21.) because that was most commonly, by dreams, voices, or visions, communicated to prophets first, and by them to the children of men, Numb. xii. 6. Once indeed God himself spake to all the thousands of Israel, from the top of Mount Sinai; but it was so intolerably dreadful, that they entreated God would, for the future, speak to them as he had done before, by men like themselves, whose terror should not make them afraid, nor their hands be heavy upon them, Job xxxiii. 7. God approved the motion; They have well said; (says he, Deut. v 27, 28.) and the matter was then settled by consent of parties, that we must never expect to hear from God any more in that way, but by prophets, who received their instructions immediately from God, with a charge to deliver them to his church. Before the sacred canon of the Old Testament began to be written, there were prophets, who were instead of Bibles to the church. Our Saviour seems to reckon Abel among the prophets, Math. xxii. 31, 33. Enoch was a prophet; and by him that was in prediction, which is to be last in execution—the judgment of the great day; (Jude 14.) Behold, the Lord comes with his holy myriads. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. God said of Abraham, He is a prophet, Gen. xx. 7. Jacob foretold things to come, Gen. xlix. 1. Nay, all the patriarchs are called prophets; (Ps. cv. 15.) Do my prophets no harm. Moses was, beyond all comparison, the most illustrious of all the Old Testament prophets, for with him the Lord spake face to face, Deut. xxxiv. 10. He was the first writing prophet, and by his hand the first foundations of holy writ were laid; even those who were called to be his assistants in the government, had the Spirit of prophecy, such a plentiful effusion was there of that spirit at that time, Numb. xi. 25. But after the death of Moses, for some ages, the Spirit of the Lord appeared and acted in the church of Israel more as a martial Spirit, than as a Spirit of prophecy, and inspired men more for acting than speaking; I mean, in the time of the Judges. We find the Spirit of the Lord coming upon Othniel, Gideon, Samson, and others, for the service of their country, with their swords, not with their pens; messages were then sent from heaven by angels, as to Gideon and Manoah, and to the people, Judges ii. 1. In all the book of Judges there is never once mention of a prophet, only Deborah is called a prophetess; then the word of the Lord was precious, there was no open vision, 1 Sam. iii. 1. They had the law of Moses, recently written; let them study that. But in Samuel prophecy revived, and in him a famous epocha, or period, of the church began; a time of great light in a constant uninterrupted succession of prophets, till some time after the captivity, when the canon of the Old Testament was completed in Malachi; and then prophecy ceased for near 400 years, till the coming of the great Prophet and his forerunner. Some prophets were divinely inspired to write the histories of the church; but they did not put their names to their writings, they only referred themselves for proof to the authentic records of those times, which were known to be drawn up by prophets, as God, Iddo, &c. David and others were prophets, to write sacred songs for the use of the church. After them, we often read of prophets, sent on particular errands, and raised up for special public services; among whom the most famous were Elijah and Elisha in the kingdom of Israel, but none of these put their prophecies in writing, nor have we any remains of them but some fragments in the histories of their times; there was nothing of their own writing, (that I remember,) but one epistle of Elijah's, 2 Chron. xxii. 12. But toward the latter end of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, it pleased God to direct his servants the prophets, to write and publish some of their sermons, or abstracts of them. The dates of many of their prophecies are uncertain, but the earliest of them was in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and Jeroboam the second, his contemporary, king of Israel, about 200 years before the captivity, and not long after Joash had slain Zachariah the son of Jehoiada, in the courts of the temple. If they begin to murder the prophets, yet they shall not murder their prophecies; they shall remain as witnesses against them. Hoses was the first of the writing prophets; and Joel, Amos, and Obadiah published their prophecies about the same time. Isaiah began some time after, and not long; but his prophecy is placed first, because it is the largest of them all, and has most in it of Him to whom all the prophets bare witness; and indeed, so much of Christ, that he is justly styled the Evan-
The first verse of this chapter is intended for a title to the whole book, and it is probable that this was the first sermon that this prophet was appointed to publish, and to affix in writing (as Calvin thinks the custom of the prophets was) to the doors of the temple, and its proclamations were fixed to public places, that all might read them; (Hab. ii. 2.) and those who would, might take out authentic copies of them; the original being, after some time, laid up by the priests among the records of the temple. The whole sermon which is contained in this chapter has in it, I. A high charge exhibited, in God's name, against the Jewish church and nation: 1. For their ingratitude, v. 2, 3. 2. For their incorrigibility, v. 5. 3. For the universal corruption and degeneracy of the people, v. 4, 6, 21, 22. 4. For the perversion of justice by their rulers, v. 23. II. A sad complaint of the judgments of God, which they had brought upon themselves by their sins, and by which they might be visited by the most bitter plagues, v. 24, 25. III. A just rejection of those shows and shadows of religion, which they kept up among them, notwithstanding this general defection and apostasy, v. 10., 11. IV. An earnest call to repentance and reformation, setting before them life and death; life if they complied with the call, and death, if they did not, v. 16., 18. V. A threatening of ruin to those who would not be reformed, v. 24, 25. VI. The publication of this divine revelation, and a return to their primitive purity and prosperity, v. 25., 27. And all this is to be applied by us, not only to the communities we are members of, in their public interests, but to the state of our own souls.

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

Here is, 1. The name of the prophet, Isaiah; or Jesahiah, for it is in the Hebrew, which is, in the New Testament, read Esaias. His name signifies, the salvation of the Lord. A proper name for a prophet by whom God gives knowledge of salvation to his people, especially for this prophet, who prophesies so much of Jesus the Saviour, and the great salvation wrought out by him. He is said to be the son of Amoz; not Amos the prophet, the two names in the Hebrew differ more than in the English; but, as the Jews think, of Amoz the brother, or son, of Amaziah king of Judah; a tradition as certain as that rule which they give, That where a prophet's father is named, he also was himself a prophet. The prophets, pupils and successors, are indeed often called their sons, but we have few instances, if any, of their own sons being their successors.

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

3. The subject of the prophecy: it was what he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, the country of the two tribes, and that city which was their metropolis. There is little in it relating to Ephraim, or the ten tribes, of whom there is so much in the prophecy of Hosea. Some chapters there are in this book, which relate to Babylon, Egypt, Tyre, and some other neighbouring nations; but it takes its title from that which is the main substance of it, and it is therefore said to be concerning Judah and Jerusalem; the other nations spoken of are such as are near to these, or more alluded to; and this is the prophecy of Hosea. Some chapters there are in this book, which relate to Babylon, Egypt, Tyre, and some other neighbouring nations; but it takes its title from that which is the main substance of it, and it is therefore said to be concerning Judah and Jerusalem; the other nations spoken of are such as are near to these, or more alluded to; and this is the prophecy of Hosea.

(1.) Instructive, for it is the privilege of Judah and Jerusalem, that to them pertain the oracles of God. (2.) Reproof and threatening; for if in Judah, where God is known, if in Israel, where his name is great, iniquity be found, they, sooner than any other, shall be reckoned with for it. (3.) Comfort and encouragement in evil times; for the children of Zion shall be joyful in their king.
The date of the prophecy; he prophesied in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. By this it appears, (1) That he prophesied long; especially if (as the Jews say) he was at last put to death by Manasseh, to a cruel death, being sown asunder; to which some suppose the apostle refers, Heb. xi. 37. From the year that king Uzziah died, (ch. vi. 1.) to Hezekiah’s sickness and recovery, was 47 years; how much before, and after, he prophesied is uncertain; but was most expressly 60, and others 80 years in all. It was an honour to him, and a happiness to his country, that he was continued so long in, his usefulness: and we must suppose both that he began young, and that he held out to old age; for the prophets were not tied, as the priests were, to a certain age, for the beginning or ending of their ministration. (2) That he passed through a variety of times. Isaiah was a good king, and Hezekiah a better, who, no doubt, gave encouragement to, and took advice from, this prophet, were patrons to him, and he privy-counsellor to them; but between them, and when Isaiah was in the prime of his time, the reign of Ahaz was very proflane and wicked; then, no doubt, he was frowned upon at court, and, it is likely, forced to abstend; good men and good nations, as those times, are forced to times in this world, and prepare for them. Then religion was run down to that degree, that the doors of the house of the Lord were shut up, and idolatrous altars were erected in every corner of Jerusalem; and Isaiah, with all his divine eloquence and messages immediately from God himself, could not help it. The best men, the best ministers, cannot do the good they would do in the world.

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

We will hope to meet with a brighter and more pleasant scene before we come to the end of this book: but truly here, in the beginning of it, every thing looks very had, very black, with Judah and Jerusalem. What is the wilderness of the world, if the church, the vineyard, have such a dismal aspect as this?

1. The prophet, though he speaks in God’s name, yet, despairing to gain audience with the children of his people, addresses himself to the heavens and the earth, and bespeaks their attention; (r. 1.) O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord will gather the law, and answer the end of their creation, than this stupid senseless people. Let the lights of heaven shame their darkness, and the fruitfulness of the earth their barrenness, and the strictness of each to its time, their irregularity. Moses begins thus (Deut. xxxiii. 1.) to which the prophet here refers, intimating, that now those times were come, which produce those lights and creatures here, who observe the law, and answer the end of their creation, than this stupid senseless people. Let the lights of heaven shame their darkness, and the fruitfulness of the earth their barrenness, and the strictness of each to its time, their irregularity. Moses begins thus (Deut. xxxiii. 1.) to which the prophet here refers, intimating, that now those times were come, which produce those lights and creatures here, who observe the law, and answer the end of their creation, than this stupid senseless people. Let the lights of heaven shame their darkness, and the fruitfulness of the earth their barrenness, and the strictness of each to its time, their irregularity. Moses begins thus (Deut. xxxiii. 1.) to which the prophet here refers, intimating, that now those times were come, which produce those lights and creatures here, who observe the law, and answer the end of their creation, than this stupid senseless people. Let the lights of heaven shame their darkness, and the fruitfulness of the earth their barrenness, and the strictness of each to its time, their irregularity.
ISAIAH, I.

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

IV. He laments the universal pravity and corruption of their church and kingdom; the disease of sin was epidemic, and all orders and degrees of men were infected with it; _Ah, sinful nation!_ iv. 4. The prophet bemoans those that would bemoan themselves; Alas for them, wo to them! He speaks with a holy indignation at their degeneracy, and a dread of the consequences of it. See here, 1. He laments the aggravation of their sin: What wickedness is there in it, iv. 4. (1.) The wickedness was universal; they were a sinful nation, the generality of the people were vicious and profane; they were so in their national capacity, in the management of their public treaties abroad, and in the administration of public justice at home; they were corrupt. Note, It is ill with a people when sin becomes national. (2.) It was very great and heinous in itself. They were laden with iniquity; the guilt of it, and the curse incurred by that guilt, lay very heavy upon them; it was a heavy charge that was exhibited against them, which they could never clear themselves from; their wickedness was upon them as a talent of lead, Zech. v. 7, 8. And their sin, as it did easily beset them, and they were prone to it, was a weight upon them, Heb. xii. 1. (3.) They came of a bad stock, they were a seed of evildoers; treachery ran in the blood, they had it by kind, which made the matter so much the worse, more provoking and less curable; they rose up in their fathers' stead, and trod in their fathers' steps, to fill up the measure of their iniquity; (Numb. xxxvii. 14.) they were a race and family of rebels. (4.) They were themselves debauched, did what they could to debauch others; they are not only corrupt children, born tainted, but children that are corrupters, that propagate vice, and infect others with it; not only sinners, but tempters, not only actuated by Satan, but agents for him. If those that are called children, _God's children_, that are looked upon as belonging to his family, be wicked and vile, their example is of the most malignant influence. (5.) They would try corrupting that, which God, they were deserters from their allegiance; they have forsaken the Lord, to whom they had joined themselves; they are gone away backward, are alienated or separated from God, have turned the back upon him, deserted their colours, and quitted their service; when they were urged forward, they ran backward, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. (6.) They would try corrupting God during defiance of him; They have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, wilfully and designingly; they knew what would anger him, and that they did. Note, The backslidings of those that have possessed religion, and relation to God, are in a special manner provoking to him.

2. How he illustrates it by a comparison taken from a sick and diseased body, all overspread with leprosy, or, like Job's, with sore boils, v. 5, 6. (1.) The distemper has seized the vitals, and so threatens to be mortal. Diseases in the head and heart are most dangerous; because the life and soul is in the head, the sick heart, the whole heart, is faint; they were become corrupt in their judgment, the leprosy was in their head, they were utterly unclear; their affection to God and religion was cold and gone; the things which remained were ready to die away, Rev. iii. 2. (2.) It has overspread the whole body, and so becomes exceedingly noisome; _From the sole of your foot unto the crown of your head_ is; the whole head and body is defiled, and so the greatest possible, there is no soundness, no good principles, no religion, (for that is the health of the soul,) nothing but wounds and bruises, guilt and corruption, the sad effects of Adam's fall; noisome to the holy God, painful to the sensible soul; they were so to David, when he complained, (Ps. xxxviii. 5.) _My wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness._ (Ps. xxxii. 5, 6.) No attempts were made for reformation, or, if they were, they proved ineffectual; The wounds have not been closed, nor bound up, nor mollified with ointment. While sin remains unrepented of, the wounds are unsearched, unwashed, the proud flesh in them not cut out, and while consequently, it remains un pardoned, the wounds are not mollified or closed up, any more than sin is redressed, which grieves God, and the preventing of their fatal consequences.

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

1. Their kingdom was almost ruined, v. 7. So miserable were they, that both their towns and their lands were wasted, and yet so stupid, that they needed to be told this, and to have it showed them; "Look, and see how it is; your country is desolate, the ground is not cultivated, for want of inhabitants, the villages being deserted, Judg. v. 7. And thus the fields and vineyards become like deserts, all grown over with thorns; (Prov. xxiv. 31.) your cities are burned with fire, by the enemies that invade you;" (fire and sword commonly go together,) "as for the fruits of your land, which should be food for your families, strangers devour them; and, to your greater vexation, it is before your eyes, and you cannot prevent it; you starve, while your enemies surfeit on that which should be your maintenance. The overthrow of your country is as the overthrow of strangers; it is used by the invaders as one might expect it should be used by strangers._

2. Jerusalem itself, which was as the daughter of Zion; (the temple built on Zion was, another, a nursing mother, to Jerusalem;) or Zion itself, the holy mountain, which had been dear to God as a daughter, was now lost, deserted, and exposed, as a cottage in a vineyard, which, when the vintage is over, nobody dwells in, or takes any care of, and looks as mean and despicable as a lodge, or hut, in a garden of cucumbers; and every person is afraid to approach it, which is shorn of its garb and ornaments, and left as it was, exposed to the insults and effects out of it, as if it were a besieged city, v. 8. And some think it is the calamitous state of the kingdom, that is represented by a diseased body, v. 6. Probably, this sermon was preached in the reign of Ahaz, when Judah was invaded by the kings of Syria and Israel, the Edomites, and the Philistines, who slew many, and carried away away away captive, 2 Kings xvii. 17. 18. _Note_. National impiety and immorality bring national desolation. Canaan, the glory of all lands, mount Zion, the joy of the whole earth, both became a reproach and a ruin; and sin made them so, that great mischief-maker.

2. Yet they were not at all reformed, and therefore God threatens to take another course with them; (v. 3.) "Why should ye be stricken any
more, with any expectation of doing you good by it, when you increase revolts as your rebukes are increased? You will revolve more and more, as you have done: as Ahaz particularly did, who, in his distress, trespassed yet more against the Lord, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. Thus the physician, when he sees the patient's case desperate, troubles him no more with physic; and the father resolves to correct his child no more, when, finding him hardened, he determines to disinherit him.

Note, (1.) There are those who are made worse by the methods God takes to make them better; the more they are stricken, the more they revolt; their corruptions, instead of being mortified, are irritated and exasperated, by their afflictions, and their hearts more hardened. (2.) God sometimes, in a way of righteous judgment, ceases to correct those who have been long incorrigible, and whom therefore he designs to destroy. The reprobate silver shall be cast, not into the furnace, but to the dunghill, Jer. vi. 29, 30. See Ezek. xxiv. 13. Hos. iv. 14. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.

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

10. Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah: 11. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of goats. 12. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? 13. Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me: the new-moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with: it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. 14. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me: I am weary to hear them. 15. And when ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Here, 1. God calls to them, (but calls in vain,) to hear his word, v. 10. 1. The title he gives them is very strange, Ye rulers of Sodom, and Ye people of Gomorrah. This intimates what a righteous thing it had been with God to make them like Sodom and Gomorrah, in respect of ruin; (v. 9.) because they had made themselves like Sodom and Gomorrah, in respect of sin. The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly, (Gen. xvn. 13.) and so were the men of Judah; when the rulers were bad, no wonder the people were so. Vice overpowered virtue, for it fed the rule of the age, on the rule; and it had destroyed it, for it had the people, the men of number, on its side: the streams being thus strong, no less a power than that of the Lord of hosts could secure a remnant, v. 9. The rulers are boldly attacked here by the prophet, as rulers of Sodom, for he knew not how to give flattering titles; the tradition of the Jews is, that for this he was imprisoned long after, and not but that the rulers of the nation, having cured the gods, and spoken evil of the ruler of his people. 2. His demand upon them is very reasonable; "Hear the word of the Lord, and give ear to the law of our God; attend to that which God has to say to you, and let his word be a law to you." The following declaration of dislike to their sacrifices, would be a kind of new law to them; though really it was but an explication of the old law, and the special respect to be had to it, as it is required to be, like, Ps. 1. 7, 8. "Hear this, and tremble; hear it, and take warning."
they omitted; nay, it should seem, they called extraordinary assemblies, and held solemn meetings, for the promotion of religion, beside those that God had appointed; yet this was not all, they applied themselves to God not only with their ceremonial observances, but with the moral principles of devotion; they prayed, they prayed often, made many prayers, thinking they should be heard for their much speaking; nay, they were fervent and importunate in prayer, they spent whole nights in prayer. Now we should have thought these, and no doubt they thought themselves, a pious, religious people; and yet they were far from being so, for,

(1) Their hearts were empty of true devotion; they came to appear before God, (v. 12.) to be seen before him; so the margin reads it; they rested in the outside of the duties, they looked no further than to be seen of men, and went no further than that which men see. (2.) Their hands were full of blood; they were guilty of murder, rape, and oppression, under colour of law and justice. The people shed blood, and the rulers did not punish them for it; the rulers shed blood, and the people were aiding and abetting, as the elders of Jezreel were to Jezebel in shedding Naboth's blood. Malice is heart-murder, in the account of God, for that is his brother in heart and soul, in effect, his hands full of blood. 2. When sinners are under the judgments of God, they will more easily be brought to fly to their devotions, than to forsake their sins, and reform their lives. Their country was now desolate, and their cities burnt; (v. 7.) and this awakened them to bring their sacrifices and offerings to God more constantly than they had done, as if they would bribe God Almighty to remove the punishment, and give them leave to go on in the sin. When he slew them, then they sought him, Ps. lxxviii. 34. Lord, in trouble they have visited thee, ch. xxvi. 16. Many that will readily part with their sacrifices, will not be persuaded to part with their sins.

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

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

(2.) As odious and offensive, God did not only not accept them, but he did detest and abhor them. "They are your sacrifices, they are none of mine; I am full of them, even surfeited with them." He needed them not, (Ps. 1. 10.) did not desire them, had had enough of them, and more than enough. Their coming into his courts he calls treading them, or trampling upon them, their very attendance on his ordinances was construed into a contempt of them. Their sacrifices were offered to him, not as an abomination to him, for it was burnt in hypocrisy, and with an ill design. Their solemn assemblies he could not away with, could not see them with any patience, nor bear the affront they gave him. The solemn meeting is iniquity; though the thing itself was not, yet, as they managed it, it was. It is a vexation, (so some read it,) a provocation, to God, to have ordinances thus prostituted, to be offered by wicked people, but to wicked purposes; "My soul hates them, they are a trouble to me, a burthen, an incumbrance; I am perfectly sick of them, and weary to hear them." He is never weary of hearing the prayers of the upright, but soon weary of the costly sacrifices of the wicked. He hides his eyes from their prayers, as that which he has an aversion to, and is angry at.

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

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

1. A call to repentance and reformation; "If you would have your sacrifices accepted, and your prayers answered, you must begin your work at the right end; Be converted to me," (so the Chal. seems to have understood it,) "be converted to me by your second-table-duties, else expect not to be accepted in the acts of your devotion." As justice and charity will never atone for atheism and preferences, so prayers and sacrifices will never atone for fraud and oppression; for righteousness toward men is as much a branch of pure religion, as religion toward God is a branch of universal righteousness.

1. They must cease to do evil, must do no more
wrong, shed no more innocent blood; that is the meaning of washing them, and making them clean, v. 16. It is not only warming for the sin they had committed, but breaking off the practice of it for the future, and mortifying all those vicious affections and dispositions which incline to it. Sin is defiling to the soul; our business is to wash ourselves from it by repenting of it, and turning from it to God. We must put away not only that evil of our doings, which is before the eye of the world, by refraining from the gross acts of sin, but that which is before God’s eyes, the roots and habits of sin, that are in our hearts; those must be crushed and mortified, before they will not be. 2. They must learn to do well. This was necessary to the completing of their repentance. Note, It is not enough that we cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well. (1.) We must be doing; not cease to do evil, and then stand idle. (2.) We must be doing good, the good which the Lord our God requires, and which will turn to a good account. (3.) We must do it well, in a right manner, and for a right end; and, (4.) We must learn to do well, we must take pains to get the knowledge of our duty, be inquisitive concerning it, in care about it, and custom ourselves to it, that we may readily turn our hands to our work, and become masters of this holy art of doing well. It is laid particularly to those instances of well-doing, wherein they had been defective; to second-table-duties; “Seek judgment; inquire what is right, that ye may do it; be solicitous to be found in the way of your duty, and do not walk at all adventures; seek opportunities of doing good. Relieve the oppressed, those whom you yourselves have oppressed; ease them of their burdens, ch. iv. 6. Ye despised my people of old; I will make you a great minister of relief of those whom others do oppress, for that is your business; right those that suffer wrong; in a special manner concern yourselves for the fatherless and the widow, whom, because they are weak and helpless, proud men trample upon and abuse; do you appear for them at the bar, on the bench, as there is occasion; speak for those that know not how to speak for themselves, and they shall not be indifferent to gratify you for your kindness.” Note, We are truly honouring God when we are doing good in the world; and acts of justice and charity are more pleasing to him than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

11. A demonstration, at the bar of right reason, of the equity of God’s proceedings against them; “Come near, and let us reason together;” (v. 18.) while your hands are full of blood, I will have nothing to do with you, though you bring me a multitude of sacrifices: but if you wash you, and make you clean, you are welcome to draw nigh to me; come now, and let us talk the matter over.” Note, Those, and those only, that break off their league with sin, shall be welcome to covenant and communion with God; he says, Come now, and let us reason together. The great sinner be present in his courts. See Jer. iv. 8. Or rather thus; there were those among them who looked upon themselves as offended by the slight God put upon the multitude of their sacrifices, as ch. iv. 5. “Wherefore have we fasted, (say they,) and thou sentest not? They represented God as a hard Master, whom it was difficult to please. “Come now, and let us reason together;” God desires that we debate the matter fairly, and I do not but to make it out that my ways are equal, but yours are unequal.” Ezek. xviii. 21. Note, Religion has reason on its side; there is all the reason in the world that we should do as God would have us to do. 2. The God of heaven descends to reason the case with those who contradict him and find fault with his proceedings, for he will be justified when he speaks, Ps. ii. 4. The case needs only to be stated, (as it is here very fairly,) and it will determine itself. God shows here upon what terms they stood, (as he does Ezek. xxiiii. 21, 24—xxxiii. 18, 19.) and then leaves it to them to judge whether they were not fair.

(3.) They cannot in reason expect any more than that, if they repent and reform, they should be restored to God’s favour, notwithstanding their former provocations; “This you may expect,” says God, “and it is very kind; who could have the face to desire it upon any other terms?” (1.) “It is very little that is required, only that you will and are willing, that you consent to obey;” so we read it; “that you may desire it of God, acquiesce in that, and give yourselves up in all things to be ruled by him that is infinitely wise and good.” Here is patience imposed for their former stubbornness, nor yet the yoke made heavier, or bound harder, on their necks; only, “Whereas hitherto you have been perverse and refractory, and would not comply with that which was for your own good, now be tractable, be governable.” He does not will, “If you be perfectly obedient,” but, “If you will obediently,” for if there be a willing mind, it is accepted. (2.) That is very great, which is promised hereupon. First, That all their sins should be pardoned to them, and should not be mentioned against them; “Though they be as scarlet, and as crimson, a double dye, first in the wool, and next in the scarlet of the original thread.” 2. They are to submit to many threads of actual transgression, though we have been often dipped, by our many backslidings, into sin, and though we have lain long soaking in it, as the cloth dips in the scarlet dye, yet pardoning mercy will thoroughly discharge the stain, and, being by it purged as with silver and gold, we shall be clean, Ps. v. 7. “If we make ourselves clean by repentance and reference to the new covenant, the heavens and earth shall be cleansed as in the day of creation.” 3. They are to submit to a full remission. Secondly, That they should have all the happiness and comfort they could desire; “Be but willing and obedient and you shall eat the good of the land, the land of promise; you shall have all the blessings of the new covenant, of the heavenly Canaan; all the good of that land.” They that go on in sin, though they dwell in a good land, cannot with any comfort eat the good of it, guilt imbitters all; but if sin be pardoned, creature-comforts become comforts indeed.

(2.) They cannot in reason expect any other than that, if they continue obstinate in their disobedience, they should be abandoned to ruin, and the sentence of the law should be executed upon them; what can be more just? (v. 26.) “If you refuse and rebel;” if you continue to be obstinate against God, his government, and refuse the offers of divine grace, you shall be devoured with the sword; with the sword of your enemies, which shall be commissioned to destroy you, with the sword of God’s justice, his wrath, and vengeance, which shall be drawn against you; for this is that which the mouth of the Lord has spoken, and which he will make good, for the maintaining of his own honour. Note, Those that will not be governed by God’s sceptre, will certainly and justly be devoured by his sword.

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

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

Here.

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

This is illustrated, (1.) By similitudes; (v. 22.) Thy silver is become dross; this degeneracy of the magistrates, whose character is the reverse of that of their predecessors, is as great a reproach and injury to the kingdom, as the debasing of their coin would be, and the turning of their silver into dross. Righteous princes and righteous cities, are silver for the treasury; but unrighteous ones are as dross for the dung-hill—How is the gold become dim! Lam. iv. 1. Thy wine is mixed with water, and so is become flat and sour. Some understand both these literally; the wine they sold was adulterated, it was half water; the money they paid was counterfeit, and so they cheated all they dealt with. But it is rather to be taken figuratively, and, comprehended by their princes; and religion and the word of God were sophisticated by their priests, and made to serve what they pleased. Dross may shine like silver, and the wine that is mixed with water may retain the colour of wine, but neither is worth any thing. Thus they retained a show and pretence of virtue and justice, but had no true sense of either. (2.) By some instances; (v. 23.) Thy princes, that should keep others in their allegiance to God, and subjection to his law, are themselves rebellious, and set God and his law at defiance. They that should restrain thieves, proud and rich oppressors, those worst of robbers, and those that designedly cheat their creditors, who are no better, they are themselves the companions of thieves, connive at them, do as they do, and are greater thieves, because they are princes, and have power in their hands; they share with the thieves they protect in their unlawful gain, (Ps. l. 18.) and cast in their lot among them, Prov. i. 13, 14. [1.] The profit of their places is all their aim; to make the best hand they can of them, right or wrong. They love gifts, and follow after reward; they set their hearts upon their salaries increased and encreased, because they are princes, and have power in their hands; they share with the thieves they protect in their unlawful gain, (Ps. l. 18.) and cast in their lot among them, Prov. i. 13, 14. [2.] The duty of their places is none of their care; they sought to protect those that are injured, and take cognizance of the appeals made to them; why else were they preferred? But they judge not the fatherless, take no care to guard the orphans, nor does the cause of the widow come unto them; because the poor widow has no bribe to give, with which to make way for her, and to bring her cause on. These will have a great deal to answer for, who, when they are the patrons of the oppressed, are their greatest oppressors.

II. A resolution is taken up to redress these grievances; (v. 24.) Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, who has power to make good what he says, who has hosts at command for the executing of his purposes, and whose power is engaged for Israel; Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries. What? (v. 25.) Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: Ah, I will take revenge upon such wicked rulers that are cruel and oppressive, are God's enemies, his adversaries, and shall so be accounted of, and so dealt with. If the holy seed corrupt themselves, they are the fief of his own house. 2. They are a burden to the God of heaven, which is implied in his casing himself of them; the Mighty One of Israel, that can bear any thing, nay, that upbears all the weakness of God's people, his men's iniquities, ch. xxiii. 24. Amos i. 3. 3. God will find out a time and a way to ease himself of this burden, by avenging himself on those that thus bear hard upon his patience. He here speaks as one triumphing in the foresight of it. Ah, I will ease me. He will ease the earth of the burden under which it groans, (Rom. viii. 21, 22.) will ease his own name of the reproaches with which it is loaded.
He will be eased of his adversaries, by taking vengeance on his enemies; he will sipe them out of his mouth, and so he eased of them, Rev. iii. 16. He speaks with pleasure of the day of vengeance being in his heart, ch. lxiii. 4. If God's procuring people conform not to his image, as the Holy One of Israel, (v. 4.) they shall feel the weight of his hand as the Mighty One of Israel: his power, which was wont to be engaged against the wicked, shall be engaged against them. Two ways God will case himself of this grievance: 

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

Observe, [1.] The reformation of a people is God's own work; and, if ever it be done, it is he that brings it about. The very words of the lxxvii. 6, will fit for the reviving of religion, which I did, at first, for the planting of it." He can do it easily, with the turn of his hand; but he does it effectually, for what opposition can stand before the arm of the Lord revealed? [2.] He does it by blessing them with good magistrates, and good ministers of state; (v. 26.) "I will restore thy judges, as at the first, to put the lowly man in judgment over the very man; and thy counsellors, to transact public affairs, as from the beginning:" either the same persons that had been turned out, or others of the same character. [3.] He does it by restoring judgment and righteousness among them, (v. 27.) by planting in men's minds principles of justice, and governing their lives by those principles. Men may do much by external restraints; but God does it effectually by the influences of his Spirit, as a Spirit of Judgement, ch. iv. 4.—xxviii. 6. See Ps. lxxxv. 10, 11. [4.] The reformation of a people will be the redemption of them and their converts, for sin is the worst captivity, the worst slavery; and the great and eternal redemption is that by which Israel is redeemed, from all his iniquities; (Ps. cxxx. 8.) and the blessed Redeemer is he that turns away ungodliness from Jacob, (Rom. x. 4.) and saves his people from their sins, Mat. i. 21. All the redeemed of the Lord shall be converted, and their conversion is their redemption. Her converts, or, they that return of her; so the margin. God works deliverance for us, by preparing us for it with judgment and righteousness. [5.] The reviving of a people's virtue, is the restoring of their honour; Afterward thou shalt be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city; From First, Thou shalt be so; the reformation of the magistracy is a good step toward the reforming of the city and the country too. Secondly, Thou shalt have the praise of being so; and a greater praise there cannot be to any city, than to be called the city of righteousness, and to retrieve the ancient honour, which was lost, when the faithful city became a harlot. [6.] By cutting off those that hate to be reformed, that they may not remain either as snares, or as scandals, to the faithful city. [1.] It is an utter ruin that is here threatened. They shall be destroyed and consumed, and not chastened and corrected only. The expiation of them will be necessary to the redemption of Zion. [2.] It is a universal |134|law of God, when he deals with his people, and the sinners together; the openly profane, that have quite cast off all religion, and the hypocrites, that live wicked lives under the cloak of a religious profession—thely shall both be destroyed together; for they are both alike an abomination to God, both those that contradict religion, and those that contradict themselves in their pretensions to it. And they that forsake the Lord, to whom they had for merely joined themselves, shall be consumed as the water in the conduit-pipe is soon consumed when it is cut off from the fountain. [3.] It is an inevitable ruin, they shall be destroyed. 

First, Their idols shall not be able to help them; the oaks which they have desired, and the gardens which they have chosen; the images, the dumb-birds, which they have worshipped in their groves, and under the green trees, which they were fond of, and wedded to for for which they forsook the true God, and which they worshipped privately in their own gardens, even then when idolatry was banished from the land. Reformed. This was the practice of the transgressors and the sinners; but they shall be ashamed of it, not with a show of repentance, but of despair; v. 29. They shall have cause to be ashamed of them; for after all the court they have made to themselves, they shall find no benefit by them; but the idols themselves shall go into captivity, ch. xlvi. 1. 2. Note, The Lord has always a right, but for preventing confusion for yourselves. You were fond of the oaks and the gardens; but you yourselves shall be. 1. Like an oak without leaves, withered and blasted, and stripped of all its ornaments. Justly do those wear no leaves, that bear no fruit; as the fig-tree that Christ cursed. 2. Like a garden without water, that is neither rained upon, nor watered with the floods. Do they have the comforts of any favours from God? (v. 15.) and consequently, is parched, and all the fruits of it gone to decay. Thus shall they be. That trust in idols, or in an arm of flesh, Jer. xvii. 5, 6. But they that trust in God never find him as a wilderness, or as waters that fail, Jer. ii. 31. 

Secondly, They shall not be able to help themselves; (v. 31.) Even the strong man must be anatomised, not only soon broken, and pulled to pieces, but daily catching fire; and his work, (so the margin reads it,) that by which he hopes to fortify and secure himself, shall be as a spark to his own tow, shall set him on fire, and he and his work shall burn together. His own counsels shall be his ruin; his own sin kindles the fire of God's wrath, which shall burn to the lowest hell, and none shall quench it. When he burns shame shall be his, and he shall burn with shame; and God makes himself to him as a consuming fire, what can prevent the utter ruin of the sinner? Now all this is applicable, 1. To the blessed work of reformation, which was wrought in Hezekiah's time, after the abominable corruptions of the reign of Ahaz. Then good men came to be preferred, and the faces of the wicked were filled with shame. 2. To their return out of their captivity in Babylon, which had thoroughly cured them of idolatry. 3. To the gospel-kingdom, and the pouring out of the Spirit, by which the New Testament church should be made a new Jerusalem, a city of righteousness. 4. To the second coming of Christ, when he shall thoroughly purge his floor, his field, shall gather the wheat into his barn, into his garner, and burn the chaff, the tares, with unquenchable fire.

CHAP. II.

With this chapter begins a new sermon, which is continued in the two following chapters. The subject of this discourse is Judah and Jerusalem, v. 1. In this chapter, the prophet speaks, 1. Of the glory of the christians, Jerusalem, and the church — the chruch-church of Christ, and the succession of many to it, (v. 2, 3,) and the great peace it should introduce into the world, (v. 4.) whence he infers the duty of the house of Jacob, v. 5. 2. Of the shame of the Jews, Jerusalem, as it then was, and as it was, and shall be after its rejecting of the gospel, and being rejected of
1. The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the word, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 4. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. 5. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.

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

This sermon begins with the prophecy relating to the last days, the days of the Messiah, when his kingdom should be set up in the world, at the latter end of the Mosaic economy. In the last days of the earthly Jerusalem, just before the destruction of Jerusalem, the Messiah should rise, erected, Heb. xii. 22. Gal. iv. 26. Note, Gospel-times are the last days. For, 1. They were long in coming, were a great time waited for by the Old Testament saints, and came at last. 2. We are not to look for any dispensation of divine grace, but what we have in the gospel, Gal. i. 8, 9. 3. We are to look for the second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of time, as the Old Testament saints did for his first coming. 4. Come, come, 1 John ii. 18.

Now the prophet here foretells,

I. The setting up of the Christian church, and the planting of the Christian religion in the world. Christianity shall then be the mountain of the Lord's house; where that is professed, God will grant his presence, receive his people's homage, and grant instruction and blessing, as he did of old in the temple of Melchizedek. The Christian church, incorporated by Christ's charter, shall then be the rendezvous of all the spiritual seed of Abraham. Now it is here promised, 1. That Christianity shall be openly preached and professed; it shall be prepared (so the margin reads it) in the top of the mountains, in the view and hearing of all. Hence Christ's disciples are compared to a city on a hill, which cannot be hid, Matt. v. 14. They had many eyes upon them. Christ himself spoke openly to the world, John xvii. 20. What the apostles did, was not done in a corner, Acts xix. 26. It was the lighting of a beacon, the setting up of a standard. Its being every where spoken against, supposes that it was everywhere spoken of. 2. That it shall be firmly fixed and rooted; that it shall be established on the top of the everlasting mountains, built upon a rock, so that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, unless they could pluck up mountains by their roots. He that dwells shall be said to dwell on high, ch. xxxiii. 16. The Lord has founded the gospel-Zion. 3. That it shall not only overcome all opposition, but overtop all competition; it shall be exalted above the hills. This wisdom of God in a mystery shall outshine all the wisdom of this world, all its philosophy, and all its politics. The spiritual worship which it shall introduce, shall put down the idolatries of the heathen; and all other institutions in religion shall appear mean and desplicable, in comparison with this. See Ps. lxviii. 16. Why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill which God desires to dwell in.

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

III. The mutual assistance and encouragement which this confluence of converts shall give to one another. Their pious affections and resolutions shall be so intermixed, that they shall come in, one full steam. As when the Jews from all parts of the country went forth a year to worship at Jerusalem, they called on their friends in the road, and excited them to go along with them, so shall many of the Gentiles court their relations, friends, and neighbours, to join with them in embracing the Christian religion; (v. 3.) "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord; though it be far, we will go up hill, and against heart, yet it is the mountain of the Lord, who will assist the ascent of our souls toward him." Note, Those that are entering into covenant and communion with God himself, should bring as many as they can along with them; it becomes Christians to prove one another to good works, and to further the communion of saints by inviting one another into it: not, "Do you go up to the mountain of the Lord, and pray for us, and we will pray for you." We will go, and do you as you will;" but, "Come, and let us go, let us go in concert, that we may strengthen one another's hands, and support one another's reputation:" not, "We will consider of it, and advise about it, and go hereafter," but, "Come, and let us go forthwith," Ps. cxxii. 1. Many shall say this; those that have had it said to them, shall say it to others. We will go, and shall do it as you will;" but, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and pray for us, and we will pray for you." The mountain of the Lord, but the house of the God of Jacob; for in it God's covenant with Jacob and his praying seed is kept up, and has its accomplishment; for to us now, as unto them, he never said, Seek ye me, in vain, ch. xlv. 19.

Now see here, 1. What they promise themselves, in going up to the mountain of the Lord,
There he will teach us of his ways. Note, God’s ways are to be learned in his church, in communion with his people, and in the use of instituted ordinances; the ways of duty, which he requires us to walk in, the ways of grace, in which he walks towards us. It is God that teaches his people, by his word and Spirit. It is worth while to take pains to go up to his holy mountain, to be taught his ways, for those who are willing to take that pains, shall never find it labour in vain. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know, the Lord. 2. What they promise for themselves, and one another; “If he will teach us his ways, we will walk in his paths; if he will let us know our duty, we will by his grace and wisdom accomplish the object of doing it.” Those who attend God’s word with this humble resolution, shall not be sent away without their lesson.

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

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

VI. The great peace which should be the effect of the success of the gospel in the world; (v. 4.) They shall beat their swords into ploughshares; their instruments of war shall be converted into implements of husbandry; as, on the contrary, when war is proclaimed, ploughshares are beaten into swords, Joel iii. 10. Nation shall not then lift up sword against nation, as now they do, neither shall they learn war any more, for they shall have no more occasion for it. This does not make all war abscond, John Chrysostom; or for it a prophecy that in the days of the Messiah there shall be no wars. The Jews urge this against Christians, as an argument that Jesus is not the Messiah, because this promise is not fulfilled. But, 1. It was in part fulfilled in the peaceableness of the time in which Christ was born, when wars were in a great measure ceased; witness the taxing, Luke ii. 1. The design and tendency of the gospel are to make peace, and to slay all enmities. It has in it the most powerful obligations and inducements to peace; so that one might reasonably have expected it should have had this effect, and it would have had it, if it had not been for those lusts of men, from which come wars and fightings. 3. Jews and Gentiles were reconciled, and brought together, by the gospel, and there were no more such wars between them as had been; for they became one sheath-fold under one shepherd, Eph. ii. 15. 4. The gospel of Christ, as far as it prevails, disposes men to be peaceable, softens men’s spirits, and sweetens them; and the love of Christ, shed abroad in the heart, constrains them to love one another.

5. The primitive Christians were famous for brotherly love; their very adversaries took notice of it. 6. We have reason to hope that this promise shall yet have a more full accomplishment in the latter times of the Christian church, when the Spirit shall be poured out more plentifully from on high. Then there shall be on earth peace. Who shall live when he shalls; and dost thou think in due time, for he is not a man that he should lie.

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

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

The calling in of the Gentiles was accompanied with the rejection of the Jews; it was their fall, and the diminishing of them, that was the riches of the Gentiles; and the casting off of them, that was the reconciling of the world; (Rom. xi. 12-15.) and it should seem that these verses have reference to this, and are designed to justify God therein; and yet, probably, they are primarily intended for the convincing and awakening of the men of that generation in which the prophet lived; it being usual with the prophets to speak of the things of that time were, both in mercy and judgment, as types of the things that should be hereafter. Here is, 1. Israel’s doom; this is set forth in two words,
the first and last of this paragraph; but they are two dreadful words, and which speak 1. Their case is such, therefore he has forsaken thy people. Miserable is the condition of that people whom God has forsaken, and great certainty must the provocation be, if he forsake those that have been his own people. This was the deplorable state of the Jewish church after they had rejected Christ; Migremus hine—Let us go hence. Your house is left unto you desolate (Matth. xxiii. 37.); to their shame be it recorded: the Jews, thus far the Lord might be said to forsake them, when he withdrew his help and succour from them, else they had not fallen into the hands of their enemies. But God never leaves any till they first leave him. 2. Their case desperate, wholly desperate; (v. 9.) Therefore forgive them not. This prophetical prayer amounts to a threatening, that they should be wholly cut off, and their church quite dismantled, never to be formed into such a body again, nor ever to have that cohesion and bond to the church of God, which is the desert, this doom, and the reasons upon which it is grounded: in general, it is sin; that is it, and nothing but that which provokes God to forsake his people. The particular sins he specifies, are such as abounded among them at that time, which he makes mention of for the conviction of those to whom he then preached, rather than after which afterward proved the measure-filling sin, their crucifying of Christ, and persecuting of his followers; for the sins of every age contributed toward the making up of the dreadful account at last. And there was a partial and temporary rejection of them by the captivity in Babylon hastening on, which was a type of their final destruction by the Romans, and which the sins here mentioned brought upon them.

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

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

2. God gave them his oracles, which they might as themselves, of not only the scriptures, and the seers, but the breath of the Almighty, but they slighted these, and became soaksholders like the Philistines, introduced their arts of divination, and hearkened to those who, by the stars, or the clouds, or the flight of birds, or the entrails of beasts, or other magic superstitions, pretended to discover things secret, or foretell things to come; the Philistines were noted for diviners. 1 Sam. vi. 2. Note, Those who slight true divinities, are given up to lying divinations; and they will certainly be forsaken of God, who thus forsakes him and their own mercies for lying vanities.

3. God encouraged them to put their confidence in him, and assured them that he would be their Wealth and Strength; but, distrusting his power and promise, they made gold their hope, and furnished themselves with horses and chariots, and relied upon them for their safety, v. 7. God had expressly forbidden even their kings to multiply horses to themselves, and greatly to multiply silver and gold, (v. 6.) but they did not think it expedient for themselves to forsake their own God only; but they did not think their interest in God made them a match for their neighbours, unless they had as full treasures of silver and gold, and as formidable hosts of chariots and horses, as they had. It is not having silver and gold, and horses and chariots, that is a provocation to God, but, (1.) Desiring them insatiably, so that there is no end of the treasures, no end of the chariots, no bounds or limits set to the desire of them. These shall never have enough in God, (who alone is all-sufficient,) that never know when they have enough of this world, which, at the best, is insufficient. (2.) Depending upon them, as if we could not be safe, and easy, and happy, without them, and could not but be so with them.

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

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

10. Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. 11. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. 12. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty,
and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low; 13. And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan. 14. And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up. 15. And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, 16. And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. 17. And the loveliness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. 18. And the idols he shall utterly abolish. 19. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. 20. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles, and to the bats; 21. To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. 22. Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?

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

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

1. To startle and awaken secure sinners, who cry peace to themselves, and bid defiance to God and his judgments; (v. 10.) "Enter into the rock; God shall cover thee with such terrible judgments, and strike you with such terrible apprehensions of them, that you shall be forced to enter into the rock and hide you in the dust, for fear of the Lord. You shall lose all your courage, and tremble at the shaking of a leaf; your heart shall fail you for fear, (Luke xxi. 26.) and you shall flee when none furrizes," Prov. xxviii. 1. To the same purport, v. 19. Those who have hidden the rock of Cody in the caves of the earth, the darkest, and the deepest places; they shall call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and rather crush them than not cover them, Hos. x. 8. It was so particularly at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, (Luke xxii. 38.) and of the persecuting pagan powers, Rev. vi. 16. And all, for fear of the Lord and of the glory of his majesty, were put upon him then to be a consuming fire, and themselves as stubble before him, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth, to shake the wicked out of it, (Job xxxviii. 13.) and to shake all those earthly props and supports which they have bowed themselves up with, to shake them from under them. Note, 1. With God is terrible majesty, and the glory of it is such as, sooner or later, will oblige us all to flee before him. 2. Those that will not fear God, and flee to him, will be forced to fear him, and flee from him to a refuge of lies. 3. It is folly for those that are pursued by the wrath of God, to think to escape it, and to hide or to shelter themselves from it. 4. The things of the earth are things that will be shaken; they are subject to concussions, and hastening towards a dissolution. 5. The shaking of the earth is, and will be, a terrible thing to those who set their affections wholly on things of the earth. 6. It will be the terror of the nations to be cast down in the caves of the earth, when the earth itself is shaken; there will be no shelter then but in God, and in things above. 11. To humble and abase proud sinners, that look big, and think highly of themselves, and scornfully of all about them; (v. 11.) "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled; the eyes that aim high, the con- tenace in which the pride of the heart shews itself, these shall be cast down, and there shall be a desolation of the high and mighty. And the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, their spirits shall be broken, and they shall be cast-fallen, and those things which they were proud of they shall be ashamed of. It is repeated again, (v. 17.) The lofty looks of man shall be bowed down. Note, Pride will, one way or other, have a fall. Men's haughtiness will be brought down, either by the shaking of God or the casting down of the evil of their pride, and clothing them with humility, or by the providence of God depriving them of all these things they were proud of, and laying them low. Our Saviour often laid it down for a maxim, that he who exalts himself shall be abased; he shall either abase himself in true repentance, or God will abase him, and you contempt upon him. Now here we are told,

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

2. How this shall be done; by humbling judgments, that shall mortify men, and bring them down; (v. 12.) "The day of the Lord of hosts, the day of his wrath and judgment, shall be upon every one that is proud, and therefore he now laughs at their insinence, because he knows that his day is come, when he will be upon them ere they are aware, Ps. xxxvii. 13. This day of the Lord is here said to be upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up. Jerom observes that the cedars are said to praise God, (Ps. cxviii. 9.) and are trees of the Lord, (Ps. civ. 16.) of his planting; (Isa. xli. 19.) and yet here God's wrath fastens upon the cedars, which denote to us that his day is ever so near, and certain deaths, some before many years, some before most men, will be saved, and some perish. It is brought in as an instance of the strength of God's voice, that it breaks the cedars; (Ps. xxix. 5.) and here the day of the Lord is said to be upon the cedars, those of Lebanon, that were the straightest and stately; upon the oaks, those of Bashan, that were the strongest and sturdiest; and (v. 14.) upon the natural elevations and pillars, the high mountains, and the hills that are lifted up, that overtop the valleys, and seem to
push the skies; and (v. 15.) upon the artificial fastnesses, every high tower, and every fenced wall. Understand these,

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

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

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

III. To make idolaters ashamed of their idols, and of all the affection they have had for them, and the respect they have paid to them; (v. 18.) The idols he shall utterly abolish. When the Lord alone shall be exalted, (v. 17.) he have so set his contempt upon all men, who, like Pharaoh, exalt themselves against him, but much more upon all pretended deities, who are rivals with him for divine honours; they shall be abolished, utterly abolished; their friends shall desert them, their enemies shall destroy them, so that, one way or other, an utter galliance shall be made of them. See here, 1. The vanity of false gods; they cannot secure them selves, as far are they from being able to secure their worshippers. 2. The victory of the true God over them, for great is the truth, and will prevail. 3. An oath before the ark, and Ball before the Lord of Elijah. The gods of the heathen shall be famished, (Zeph. ii. 11.) and by degrees shall perish, Jer. x. 11. The rightvful Sovereign shall triumph over all pretenders.

And as God will abolish idols, so their worshippers shall abandon them; either from a gracious conviction of their vanity and falsehood, (as Epheram, when he said, What have I to do any more with idols?) or from a late and sad experience of their inability to help them, and a woful despair of relief by them, v. 20. When men are themselves frightened by the judgments of God into the holes of the rocks and the caves of the earth, and find that they do thus in vain shift for their own safety, they shall cast their idols, which they had made their gods, and hoped to make their friends in the time of need, to the moles and to the bats, any whither out of sight, that, being freed from the incumbence of them, they may go into the leftovers of the rocks, for fear of the Lord, v. 21. Note, (1.) Those that will not be reasoned out of their sins, sooner or later shall be frightened out of them. (2.) God can make men sick of those idols that they have been most fond of; even the idols of silver, and the idols of gold, and the most monstrous men make silver and gold their idols, money their god; but the time may come when they may feel it as much their burden as ever they made it their confidence, and may find themselves as much exposed by it as ever they helped they should be guarded by it, when it tempts their enemy, sinks their ship, or tarders their flight; there was a time when the mariners threw the vessels, and even the wheat, at the feet of the god of Babylon, Acts xxvii. 38.) and the Syrants cast away their garments for haste, 2 Kings vii. 15. Or men may cast it away out of indignation at themselves for leaning upon such a broken reed. See Ezek. vii. 19. The idolaters here throw away their idols, because they are ashamed of them, and of their own folly in trusting to them; or because they are afraid (ch. xlvii. 12.) of the judgments of God are abroad; as the thief throws away his stolen goods, when he is searched for or pursused. (3.) The darkest holes, where the moles and the bats lodge, are the fittest places for idols, that have eyes, and see not; and God can force men to cast their own idols there, (ch. xxx. 22.) when they are ashamed of the oaks which they have desired, ch. i. 29. Noah shall be ashamed of Cenmos, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Beth-er, Jer. xlviii. 13. (4.) It is possible that sin may be both loathed and left, and yet not truly repented of; loathed, because surfeited on; left, because there is no opportunity of committing it; yet not repented of out of any love to God, but only out of a slavish fear of his wrath.

IV. Concerning those that have trusted in an arm of flesh, ashamed of their confidence; (v. 22.) "Cease ye from man. The providences of God concerning you shall speak this aloud to you, and there fore take warning beforehand, that you may prevent the unmeasurableness and shame of a disappointment; and consider," 1. How weak man is; His breath is in his nostrils, puffed out every moment, and gone for good and all. Man is a fleeting creature, and may die quickly; our nostrils, in which our breath is, are of the outward parts of the body; what is there is like one standing at the door, ready to depart, may, the doors of the nostrils are always open, the breath in them may slip away, ere we are aware, in a moment. Wherein is man then to be account ed of? Alas, no reckoning is to be made of him,
for he is not what he seems to be, what he pretends to be, what we fancy him to be. Man is like to vanity, nay, he is vanity, he is altogether vanity, he is less, he is lighter, than vanity, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. 2. How wise therefore they are that cease from man; it is our duty, it is our interest, to do so. "Put not your trust in man, nor make even the greatest and mightiest of men your confidence; cease to do so. Let not your eye be to the power of man, for it is finite and limited, derived and depending; it is not from him that your judgment proceeds: let not him be your fear, let not him be your hope; but look up to the power of God, to which all the powers of men are subject and subordinate; dread his wrath, secure his favour, take him for your Help, and let your hope be in the Lord your God."  

CHAP. III.  
The prophet, in this chapter, goes on to foretell the desolations that were coming upon Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, both that by the Babylonians, and that which completed their ruin by the Romans; with some of the grounds of God's controversy with them. God threatens, 1. To deprive them of all the supports, both of their life and of their government. 2. To cast them into confusion and disorder, v. 4, 5, 12. 3. To deny them the blessings of magistracy, v. 6, 8. 4. To strip the daughters of Zion of their ornaments, v. 17. 5. To levy the sins that provoked God to deal thus with them, v. 11. 6. Their defiance of God, v. 8. 7. Their impudence, v. 9. 8. The abuse of power to oppression and tyranny, v. 13. 9. The pride of the daughters of Zion, v. 16. In the midst of the chapter, the prophet is directed how to apply himself to particular persons. (1.) To assure good people that it should be well with them, notwithstanding those general calamities, v. 10. (2.) To assure wicked people that, however God might, in judgment, remember mercy, yet it should go ill with them, v. 11. O that the nations of the earth, at this day, would hearken to the rebukes and warnings which this chapter gives!  

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

The prophet, in the close of the foregoing chapter, had given a necessary caution to all, not to put confidence in man, or any creature; he had also given a general reason for that caution, taken from the frailty of human life, and the vanity and weakness of human powers: here he gives a particular reason for it—God was now about to ruin all their creature-confidence, so that they should meet with nothing but disappointments in all their expectations from them, v. 1. The stay and the staff shall be taken away; all their supports, of what kind soever, all the things they trusted to, and looked for help and relief from. Their church and kingdom were grown old, and going to decay, and they were (after the manner of aged men, Zech. viii. 4.) leaning on a staff; now God threatens to take away their staff, and then they must fall off of course; to take away the staff is both of the city and country, of Jerusalem and of Judah, which are indeed states to one another, and if one fail, the other feels from it.  

He that does this, is the Lord, the Lord of hosts; Adon, the Lord that is himself the Stay or Foundation; if that Stay depart, all other stays certainly break under us, for he is the Strength of them all. 1. He is the Lord, the Ruler, that has authority to do it, and the Lord of hosts, that has ability to do it, he shall take away the stay and the staff. 2. St. Jerom refers this to the sensible decay of the Jewish nation, after they had crucified our Saviour, Rom. xi. 9, 10. I rather take it as a warning to all nations not to provoke God: for if they make him their Enemy, he can, and will, thus make them miserable. 3. Let us view the particulars: 1. Was their plenty a support to them? It is so to any people; bread is the staff of life: but God can take away the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water; and it is just with him to do so, when fulness of bread becomes an iniquity, (Ezek. iv. 19.) and that which was given to be provision for the life, is made provision to the death. 2. He can take away the bread and the water, by withholding the rain, Deut. xxxiii. 23, 24. Or, if he allow them, he can take away the stay of bread and the stay of water, by withholding this blessing, by which man lives, and not by bread only, and which is the staff of bread; (Matt. iv. 4.) and then the bread is not nourishing, the water not refreshing, Hag. i. 6. Christ is the bread and the water, the staff of life; if he be your Stay, we shall find that a good part not to be taken away, John vi. 27, ch. iv. 14. 2. Was their army a support to them—their generals and commanders, and military men? These shall be taken away: either cut off by the sword, or so discouraged with the defeats they meet with, that they shall throw up their commissions, and resolve to act no more; or they shall be despised by sickness, or dispirited, so as to be unfit for business; the mighty man, and the man of war, and even the inferior officer, the captain of fifty, shall be removed. It behoves ill with a people when their valour is lost, and their valiant men. Let not the strong man therefore glory in his strength, nor any people trust too much to their mighty men; but let the strong man reverence God, and the city of the terrible nations fear him, who can make them weak and despicable, ch. xxx. 3. 3. Were their ministers of state a support to them—their learned men, their politicians, their clerisy, their wits and virtuosi? These also should be taken away; the judges, who were skilled in the laws, and expert in administering justice, and the prophets, whom they used to consult, in difficult cases, the prudent, who were celebrated as men of sense and sagacity above others, and were assistants to the judges; the diviners, (so the word is,) these were used unlawful arts, who, though rotten stays, yet were stayed on; but it may be taken, as we read it, in a good sense; the ancients, elders in age, in
office, the honourable man, the gravity of whose aspect commands reverence, and whose age and experience make him fit to be a counsellor. Trade is one great support to a nation, even manufactures and handicraft trades; and therefore when the old stay is to be broken, the cunning artificer too shall be taken away; and the last is the eloquent orator, the man skilful of speech, who in some cases may do good service, though he be none of the prudent or the ancient, by putting the sense of others in good language; Moses cannot speak well, but Aaron can.

God threatens to take these away, 1. To disable them for the service of their country; making the judicious find fault at the things they have done, and the understanding of the aged, Job xii. 17, 18. Every creature is that to us, that God makes it to be; and we cannot be sure that those who have been serviceable to us, shall always be so. 2. To put an end to their days; for princes are therefore not to be trusted in, because their breath goeth forth, Ps. civ. 3, 4. Note, The removal of useful men by death, in the midst of their usefulness, is a very threatening symptom to any people.

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

V. Was the union of the subjects among themselves, their good order, and the good understanding and correspondence that they kept with one another, a stay to them? Where this is, a people may do better, though their princes be not so much as they should be; but it is here threatened that God would send an evil spirit among them too, (as Judg. ix. 23.) which would make them, 1. Insolent and disorderly towards their superiors, and 2. Insolent and disorderly towards each other; 3. Insolent and disorderly towards their superiors. It is as ill an omen to a people as can be, when the rising generation among them is generally untractable, rude, and ungovernable; and when the aged become the object of contempt; whereas he should rise up before the heavy head, and honour the face of the old man, Lev. xix. 32. When young people are conceited and pert, and carry it scornfully toward their superiors, it is not only a reproach to themselves, but of ill consequence to the public; it doth ennoble the people; it weakens the hands that hold them. It is like the case of a king, when people with persons of honour cannot support their authority, but are afforded by the base and beggarly; when judges are insulted by the mob, and their powers set at defiance. These have a great deal to answer for, who do this.

VI. Is it some, some support, to hope that, though matters may be now ill managed, yet others may be raised up, who may manage better? Yet this expectation also shall be frustrated, for the case shall be so desperate, that no man of sense or substance will meddle with it.

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

Thus to a magistrates who are to come into office, will swear themselves off, because, though they are taken to be men of some substance, yet they know themselves unable to bear the charges of the office, and to answer the expectations of those that chose them, vii. 7. He shall swear, (shall lift up the hand, the ancient ceremony used in taking an oath,) I will not be a healer, make not me a ruler. Note, Rulers may be healers, and good rulers will be glad to come, but will swear themselves off, because, though they are taken to be men of some substance, yet they know themselves unable to bear the charges of the office, and to answer the expectations of those that chose them. 8. But he was a jest to say, Thou hast clothing; be thou our ruler. A poor wise man, though in vile raiment, delivered a city, Ecc. ix. 15. We may allude to this, to show how desperate the case of fallen man was, when our Lord Jesus was pleased to become our Brother, and, though he was not courted, offered himself to be our Ruler and Saviour, and to take this ruin under his hand.
(1.) If he said true, it was a sign that man's estates were sadly ruined, when even those who made the best appearance, really wanted necessaries; a common case, and a piteous one; some, who, having lived fashionably, are willing to put the best side outward, are yet, if the truth were known, in great straits, and go with heavy hearts, for want of bread and clothing. (2.) If he did not speak true, it was a sign that men's consciences were sadly debauched, when, to avoid the expense of an office, they would load themselves with the guilt of perjury, and (which is the greatest madness in the world) would damn their souls to save their money. M. tth. xvi. 26. (3.) However it was, it was a sign that the case of the nation was very bad, when nobody was willing to accept a place in the government of it, as desiring to have either credit or profit by it, which are the two things aimed at in men's common ambition of preferment.

5. The reason why God brought things to this sad pass, even among his own people; (which is given neither by the prophet, or by him that refused to be a ruler,) it was not for want of good will to his country, but because he saw the case desperate, and post relief, and it would be to no purpose to attempt it; (so 2 Cor. xii. 6.) and because, supposing it might be done to extricate them, they may thank themselves, they have brought their destruction upon their own heads, for their tongue and their doings are against the Lord; in word and action they brake the law of God, and therein designed an affront to him; they wilfully intended to offend him, in contempt of his authority, and defiance of his justice; their tongue was against the Lord, and the more contrariety they shewed it, and the more they did it, the less effect it had upon them, for the eye of God was upon them, and that his glory was manifested among them: but they provoked him to his face, as if the more they knew of his glory, the greater pride they took in slighting it, and turning it into shame. And this, this is it, for which Jerusalem is ruined. Note, the ruin both of persons and people is owing to their sins. If they did not provoke God, he would do them no hurt, Jer. xxv. 6.

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

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

1. The ground of his controversy; it was for sin that God contended with them; if they rev them selves, let them look a little further, and they will see that they must thank themselves: We unite their souls! For they have procured evil unto themselves. Also for their souls! (so it may be read, in a way of lamentation,) for they have procured evil to themselves, v. 9. Note, The condition of sinners is woeful and very deplorable. 2. It is the soul that is damaged and endangers by sin. Sinners may often sue their cases, and be saved, yet at the same time there may be a wo to their souls. 3. Whatever evil befalls sinners, it is of their own procuring, Jer. vi. 19.

That which is here charged upon them, is,

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

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

(3.) That their judges who should have patronized and protected the oppressed, were themselves the greatest oppressors, v. 14, 15. The elders of the people, and the princes, who had learning, and could not but know better things, who had great estates, and were not under the temptation of necessity to encroach upon these about them, and who were men of honour, and should scorn to do a base thing, yet they have eaten up the vineyard, God's vineyard, which they were appointed to be the dressers and keepers of, they burnt; so the word signifies; they did as ill by it as its worst enemies could do, Ps. lxxx. 16. Or the vineyards of the poor; they wrested them out of their possession; as Jezebel did Naboth's; or devoured the fruits of them, fed their lusts with that which should have been the necessities of innocent families; the spoil of the poor was heaped up in their houses; when God came to search for stolen goods, there he found it, and it was a witness against them. 1.
was to be had, and they might have made restitution, but would not. God reasons with those great nations that were great in their own estimation, that they are not in a fit condition to judge of the state of mankind. And he asks them, What good does it do you? What hurt have they done you? Do you think you have power given you for such a purpose as this? Note, There is nothing more accountable, and yet nothing which must more certainly be accounted for, than the injuries and abuses that are done to God's people by the wicked. 10. Ye gird on the girdle of your grace, and put on the helmet of your salvation; and let the sword of the spirit be girded about your waist. The weapons of the spiritual conflict are not outward, but inward resources. Or, Their faces are bruised and crushed with the blows you have given them; you have not only ruined their estates, but given them personal abuses. Our Lord Jesus was smitten on the face, Matt. xxvi. 67.

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

III. The distinction that shall be made between particular persons, in the prosecution of this controversy; (v. 10, 11.) Say to the righteous, It shall be well with thee. To the wicked, it shall be ill with him. He had said, (v. 9.) they have rewarded evil to themselves; and to prove that, he here shows that God will render to every man according to his works. Had they been righteous, it had been well with them; but if it be ill with them, it is because they are wicked, and will be so. Thus God stated the matter to Cain, to convince him that he had no reason to be angry, Gen. iv. 7. Or it may be taken thus; God is threatening national judgments, which will ruin the public interests.

Now, 1. Some good people might fear that they should be involved in that ruin, and therefore God bids the prophets comfort them against these fears; Wo to the wicked, that ye shall not be lost in the crowd of sinners, the Judge of all the earth will not slay the righteous with the wicked; (Gen. xviii. 25.) no, assure him in God's name, that it shall be well with him. The property of the trouble shall be altered to him, and he shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. He shall have divine support, and be comforted in his distresses abroad, and so it shall be well with him. When the whole stay of bread is taken away, yet in the day of famine they shall be satisfied, they shall eat the fruit of their doings; they shall have the testimony of their consciences for them, that they kept themselves pure from the common iniquity, and therefore the common calamity is not the same thing to them that it is to others; they brought no fuel to the flame, and therefore are not themselves fuel for it. 2. Some wicked people might hope that they should escape that ruin, and therefore God bids the prophets shake their vain hopes; Wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him; (v. 11.) to him the judgments shall have a sting, and there shall be wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery.

There is a wo to wicked people, and though they may think to shelter themselves from public judgment, yet it shall be ill with them; it will grow worse and worse with them if they resist, nor shall the worst of all be last; for the reward of his hands shall be done to him, in the day when every man shall receive according to the things done in the body.

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

The prophet's business was to show all sorts of people what they had contributed to the national guilt, and what share they must expect in the national judgments. The prophets shake their vain hopes, and prove and warns the daughters of Zion, tells the lades of their faults; and Moses, in the law, having denounced God's wrath against the tender and delicate woman, (the prophets being a comment upon the law, Deut. xxxviii. 56.) he here tells them how they should smart by the calamities which were coming upon them. Observe, The prophet expressly vouches God's authority for what he said, lest it should be thought it was undermining him to take notice of such things, and should be ill-received by the lades; The Lord saith it. Whether they will hear, or whether they will forget, let them know that God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the folly and vanity of proud women, and his law takes cognizance.
even of their dress. Two things they here stand noted for, height and wantonness; directly contrary to that modesty, shame-facedness, and sobriety, with which women ought to adorn themselves, 1 Tim. ii. 9. They discovered the disposition of their mind by their gait and gesture, and the lightness of their carriage. They are naughty, for they walked with stretched-forth necks, that they may seem high and lofty; one looks down upon them, or, to receive a look or a smile; their eyes are wanton; receiving, so the word is; with their amorous glances they draw men into their snares; they affect a formal starchy way of going, that people may look at them, and admire them, and know they have been at the dance-school, and have learned the minute-step; they go musing, and purposely tramping, not willing to set so much as the sole of their foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy; they make a tinkling with their feet, having, as some think, chains, or little bells, upon their shoes, that made a noise; they go as if they were fettered; so some read it; like a horse trammelled, that he may learn to pace. Thus Agag came delicately, 1 Sam. xv. 32. Such a nice affectation is a force upon that which is natural, and ridiculous both to the senses, and to God; but as it is an evidence of a vain mind, it is offensive to God. And two things aggravated it here, (1.) That these were the daughters of Zion the holy mountain, who should have behaved with the gravity that becomes women professing godliness. (2.) That it should seem, by the connexion, they were the wives and daughters of the princes who spoilt and oppressed the poor, (v. 14, 15.) that they might maintain this pride and luxury of their families.

2. The punishments threatened for this sin; and they answer the sin, as face answers to face in a glass, v. 17, 18. (1.) They walked with stretched-forth necks, but God will smile with a scab the crown of their head, which shall lower their crests, and make them ashamed to show their heads, being obliged by it to cut off their hair. Note, Loathsomeness diseases are often sent as the just punishment of pride, and are sometimes the immediate effect of lewdness, the flesh and the body being consumed by it. (2.) They cared not what they laid out in furnishing themselves with great variety of fine clothes; but God will reduce them to such poverty, that they might be ashamed to show their heads, being obliged by it to cut off their hair. Note, Loathsomeness diseases are often sent as the just punishment of pride, and are sometimes the immediate effect of lewdness, the flesh and the body being consumed by it. (3.) They were extremely fond and proud of their ornaments; but God will strip them of these ornaments, when their houses should be plundered, their treasures rifled, and they themselves led into captivity. And the prophet here specifies many of the ornaments which they used, as particularly as he was able, and do so the names of them; and yet the mention of them is not in vain, but is designed to expose the folly of the daughters of Zion; for, (1.) Many of these things, we may suppose, were very odd and ridiculous, and if they had not been in fashion, would have been hooted at. They were fitter to be toys for children to play with, than ornaments for grown people to go to mount Zion in. (2.) Those things that were decent and convenient, as the linen, hoods, and the veils, needed not to have been provided in such abundance and variety. It is necessary to have apparel, and that all should have it according to their rank; but the occasion there was for so many changeable suits of apparel, (v. 22.) that they might not be seen two days together in the same suit. "They must have (as the hemily against excess of apparel speaks) one gown for the day, another for the night; one for the toasting, another for the working-day, another for the holy-day; one of this colour, another of that colour, one of cloth, another of silk or damask; one dress for dinner, another after; one of the Spanish fashion, another Turkey, and never content with sufficient." Which, as it is an evidence of pride and vain curiosity, so must needs spend a great deal, in gratifying a base lust, which ought to have been repressed, and kept in works of pity and charity; and it is well if God forget not the pleading of the poor, or poor creditors defrauded, to support it. (3.) The enumeration of these things intimates what care they were in about them, how much their hearts were upon them, what an exact account they kept of them, how nice and critical they were about them, how insatiable their desire was of them, so much of their comfort was bound up in them. A man cannot account for all his expences, though they were ever so many, (Jer. ii. 32.) but would report them as readily, and talk of them with as much pleasure, as if they had been things of the greatest moment. The prophet does not speak of these things as in themselves sinful; they may lawfully be had and used, but as things which they were proud of, and should therefore be deprived of. 4. They were very nice and curious about their clothes; but God would make those bodies of theirs which they were at such expense to beautify and make easy, a reproach and burtten to them; (v. 24.) Instead of sweet smell (those tablets, or boxes of perfume, houses of the soul or breath, as they are called, v. 20. margin) there shall be stink, garments grown filthy, with being long worn, or from some loathsom disease, or plasters for the cure of it; instead of a rich embroidered girdle, used to make the clothes sit tight, there shall be a rent, a rending of the clothes for grief, or old rotten clothes rent into rags; instead of well-set hair, curiously plaited and powdered, there shall be baldness, the hair being plucked off or shaven, as was usual in times of great affliction, (Ez. xxv. 2. Jer. xvi. 6.) or in great servitude, Ezek. xvi. 15. the hair shall be shorn, or scarf, or sash, a girding of sackcloth, in token of deep humiliation; and burning instead of beauty. Those that had a good complexion, and were proud of it, when they are carried into captivity, shall be tamed and sun-burnt; and it is observed, that the best faces are soonest injured by the weather. From all this let us learn, (1.) Not to be nice and curious about our apparel, nor to affect that which is gay and costly, or to be proud of it. (2.) Not to be secure in the enjoyment of any of the delights of sense, because we know not how soon we may be stripped of them, or what straits we may be reduced to.

5. They designed these by ornaments to charm the gentlemen, and win their affections, (Prov. vii. 15, 17.) but they shall be none to be desired by them for apparel, nor to affect that which is gay and thy mighty in the war. The fire shall consume them, and then the maidens shall not be given in marriage; as it is, Ps. lxxvi. 63. When the sword comes with commission, the mighty commonly fall first by it, because they are most forward to venture. And when Zion's guards are cut off, no marvel that Zion's gates lament and mourn, (v. 25.) the enemies having made themselves masters of them, and the city itself, being desolate, being emptied or sw. pt, shall sit upon the ground, like a dissect
widow. If sin be harboured within the walls, lamentation and mourning are near her gates.

CHAP. IV.

In this chapter, we have, 1. A threatening of the poverty and scarceness of men, (v. 1.) which ought so far to increase the fear of the forementioned chapter, to which it has a plain reference. 2. A promise of the restoration of Jerusalem’s peace and purity, righteousness and safety, in the days of the Messiah, v. 2. 3. The mourners in that day shall be called holy, v. 3. 4. The Lord shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: 4. When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have put the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

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

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

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

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

2. In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: 4. When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have put the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

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

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

1. That God will raise a righteous Branch, which shall produce fruits of righteousness; (v. 3.) In that day, that same day, at that very time, when Jerusalem shall be destroyed, and the Jewish nation extirpated and dispersed, the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up; and then shall be the reviving of the church, when every one shall fear the utter ruin of it.

1. Christ himself shall be exalted; he is the Branch of the Lord, the Man, the Branch: it is one of his prophetical names, our Servant, the Branch, (Zech. iii. 8.—xii. 12.) the Branch of righteousness, (Jer. xxxiii. 5.—xxxiii. 15.) a Branch out of the stem of Jesse (ch. xi. 1.) and that, as some think, is alluded to when he is called a Nazarene, Matth. ii. 23. Here he is called the Branch of the Lord, because planted by his power, and flourishing to his praise. The ancient Chaldean Paraphrase here reads The Christ, or Messiah of the Lord. He shall be the Beauty, and Glory, and Joy. (1.) He shall himself be advanced to the joy set before him, and the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. He that was a Reproach of men, and whose visage was marred more than any man’s, is now, in the upper world, beautiful and glorious, as the sun in his strength, admired and adored by all heaven. (2.) He shall be beautiful and glorious in the esteem of all believers, shall gain an interest in the world, and a name among men, above every name. To them that believe he is precious, he is an Honour, (1 Pet. ii. 7.) the Praise of ten thousand, (Cant. v. 10.) and altogether glorious. Let us rejoice that he is so, and let him be so to us.
2. His gospel shall be embraced. The gospel is the fruit of the Branch of the Lord; all the graces and comforts of the gospel spring from Christ. But it is called the fruit of the earth, because it springs up in this world, and was calculated for the present state. Then timber comes shortest to a corner of wheat, that falls into the ground, and dies, and so brings forth much fruit, John xii. 24. The success of the gospel is represented by the earth's yielding her increase, (Ps. lxv. 6,) and the planting of the Christian church is God's sowing it to himself in the earth, Hos. ii. 23. We may understand it of both the persons, and the things, that are the products of the gospel; they shall be excellent and comely, and be very acceptable to them that are escaped of Israel, of that remnant of the Jews, which was saved from perishing with the rest in unbelief, Rom. xi. 5. Note, If Christ be precious to us, his gospel will be so, and all its truths and promises; his church will be so, and all that belong to it. These are the good fruit of the earth, in comparison with which, all other things are but weeds. It will be a good evidence to us, that we are of the chosen remnant, distinguished from the rest that are called Israel, and marked for salvation, if we are brought to see a transcendent beauty in Christ and holiness, and the saints, the excellent ones of the earth. As a type of this blessed day, Jerusalem, after Sennacherib's invasion, and after the captivity of Babylon, was comforted, and he blessed with the fruits of the earth; compare ch. xxxvii. 31, 32. The remnant shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. And if by the fruit of the earth here we understand the good things of this life, we may observe, that those have peculiar sweetness in them to the chosen remnant, who, having a covenant-right to the promises, keep them, and observe them. If the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious in our eyes, even the fruit of the earth also will be excellent and comely, because then we may take it as the fruit of the promise, Ps. xxxvii. 16. 1 Tim. iv. 8.

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

III. That God will reform his church, and will rectify and amend whatever is amiss in it. v. 8. Then the remnant shall be called holy, when the Lord shall have washed away their filth, washed it from among them by cutting off the wicked persons, washed it from within them by purging out the filth of the earth. They shall not be called so, till they are in some measure made so. Gospel-times are times of reformation, (Heb. ix. 10,) typified by the reformation in the days of Hezekiah, and that after the captivity, to which this promise refers. Observe, 1. The places and persons to be reformed. Jerusalem, though the holy city, needed reformation; and, being the royal city, the reformation of Jerusalem would have a good influence upon the whole kingdom. The writers of God also must be reformed, the women in a particular manner, whom he had reproved; ch. iii. 16. When they were decked in their ornaments, they thought themselves wondrous clean; but, being proud of them, the prophet calls them their filth, for no sin is more abominable to God than pride; or by the daughters of Zion may be meant the country, towns, and villages, which were related to Jerusalem, as the mother-city, and which needed reformation. 2. The reformation itself; the filth shall be washed away, for wickedness is filthiness, particularly bloodshed, for which Jerusalem was infamous, (2 Kings xxi. 16,) and which defiles the land more than any other sin. Note, The reformation of a city is the cleansing of it; for the vicious customs and fashions are suppressed, and the civil society becomes more and more holy. The place is made clean and sweet, which before was a dunghill: and this is not only for its credit and reputation among strangers, but for the comfort and health of the inhabitants themselves. 3. The Author of the reformation; The Lord shall do it: reformation-work is God's work; if any thing be done to reform, it is he that does it. But how can the judgment of his presence in the sanctuary, where the spirits were washed and consumed; but it is by the Spirit of his grace that they are reformed and converted. This is work that is done, not by might, or by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, (Zech. iv. 6,) working both upon the sinners themselves that are to be reformed, and upon magistrates, ministers, and others that are to be employed as instruments of reformation, (Eph. iv. 11) As Spirit of judgment, enlightening the mind, causing the conscience, as a Spirit of wisdom, guiding us to deal prudently, (Isa. lli. 13,) as a discriminating, distinguishing Spirit, separating between the precious and the vile. (2.) As a Spirit of burning, quickening and invigorating the affections, and making men zealously affected in a good work. The Spirit works as fire, Matt. iii. 11. An ardent love to Christ and souls, and a flaming zeal against sin, will carry men on with resolution in their endeavours to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. See Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16.

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

1. Their tabernacles shall be defended, v. 5. (1.) Their dwelling-places; the tabernacles of their rest, their own houses, where they worship God, alone, and with their families. That blessing which is upon the families of Aaron, shall be upon the families of the Lord, Prov. iii. 33. In the tabernacle of the righte-ous shall the voice of rejoicing and salvation be, Ps. cxviii. 13. Note, God takes particular cognizance and care of the dwelling-places of his people, of every one of them, the poorest cottage as well as the stately palace. When iniquity is far from the tabernacle, the Almighty shall be its
Defence, Job xxiii. 23, 25. (2.) Their assemblies or tabernacles of meeting for religion and worship. No mean things is this to a people; for the promise points at a time when not one stone of that shall be left upon another; but all the congregations of Christians, though but two or three meet together in Christ's name, shall be taken under the special protection of Heaven; they shall no more be scattered, no more disturbed, nor shall any weapon formed against them prosper. Note, We ought to reckon it great mercy, if we have liberty to worship God in public, free from the alarms of the sword of war or persecution.

Now this writ of protection is drawn up, [1.] In a similitude taken from the safety of the camp of Israel, when they marched through the wilderness. God will give to the Christian church as real proofs, though not so sensible of his care of them, as he gave to them then. The Lord will again create a cloud, and smoke by day, to screen them from the scorching heat of the sun, and the shining of a flaming fire by night, to enlighten and warm the air, which, in the night, is cold and dark. See Exod. xiii. 21. Neh. ix. 19. This pillar of cloud and fire interposed between the Israelites and the Egyptians, Exod. xiv. 20. Note, Though miracles are ceased, yet God is the same to the New Testament church, that he was to Israel old: the very same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. [2.] In a similitude taken from the outside cover of rams' skins and badgers' skins, that was upon the curtains of the tabernacle, as if every dwelling-place of Mount Zion and every assembly were as dear to God as that tabernacle was: Upon all the glory shall be a defence, to save it from wind and weather. Note, The church on earth has its glory, gospel-truths and ordinances, the scriptures and the ministry, are the church's glory; and upon all this glory there is a defence, and ever shall be, for the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church. If God himself be the Glory in the midst of it, he will himself be a Wall of fire round about it, impenetrable, and impregnable. Grace in the soul is the glory of it, and those that have it, are kept by the power of God as in a strong hold. 1 Pet. i. 5. 2. Their tabernacle shall be a defence to them, v. 6. God's tabernacle was a pavilion to the saints, Ps. xxxvii. 5. But when that is taken down, they shall not want a covert: the divine power and goodness shall be a tabernacle to all the saints, God himself will be their Hiding-place. (Ps. xxxvi. 7.) they shall be at home in him, Ps. xci. 9. He will himself set forth to them shall be punished with famine, v. 8., 12. xxxii. 2.) and his name a strong tower. Prov. xxvii. 10. He will be not only a Shadow from the heat in the day-time, but a Cover from storm and rain. Note, In this world we must expect change of weather, and all the inconveniences that attend it; we shall meet with storm and rain in this lower region, and at other times the heat of the day, no less burdensome: but God is a Refuge to his people, in all weathers.

CHAP. V.

In this chapter, the prophet, in God's name, shows the people of God their transgressions, even the house of Jacob their sins, and the judgments which were likely to be brought upon them for their sins. He begins his parable under the similitude of an unfruitful vineyard, representing the great favours God had bestowed upon them, their disappointing of his expectations from them, and the rain they had thereby deserved, v. 1. 2. By an enumeration of the sins that did abound among them, with a threatening of punishments that should answer to the sins: 1. Covetousness, and goodness of worldly wealth, and shall be punished with famine, v. 8., 10. 11, 12, 22.) 2. Rioting, reveling, and drunkenness, (v. 11, 12, 22.) punished with captivity and all the miseries that attend it, v. 13., 17. 3. Preumption in sin, and defying the justice of God, v. 18. 19. 4. Confounding the distinctions between virtue and vice, and so undermining the principles of religion, v. 20. 5. Self-conceit, v. 21. 6. Perverting justice; for which, and the other instances of reigning wickedness among them, a great and dreadful desolatiom is threatened, which shall lay all waste, (v. 24., 25.) and which should be effected by a foreign invasion, (v. 26., 30.) referring perhaps to the havoc made not long after by Sennacherib's army.

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

See what variety of methods the great God takes to awaken sinners to repentance, by convincing them of sin, and showing them their misery and danger, by reason of it: to this purport he speaks sometimes in plain terms, and sometimes in parables, sometimes in prose, sometimes in verse, as here: "We have tried to reason with you, (ch. ii. 8.) now let us put your case into a poem, inscribed to the honour of my Well-beloved." God the Father dedicates it to the honour of Christ his well-beloved Son, whom he has constituted Lord of the vineyard. The prophet sings it to the honour of Christ too, for he is his Well-beloved. The Old Testament prophets were friends of the Bridegroom: Christ is God's beloved Son, and our beloved Saviour: whatever he has said of the song of the church must be understood of the praise, even that which (like this) tends to our shame. This parable is put into a song, that it might be the more moving and affecting, might be the more easily learned, and exactly remembered, and the better transmitted to posterity; and it is an exposition of the song of Moses, (Deut. xxxii.) showing, that what he then foretold, was now fulfilled. Jerem. says, Christ, the Well-beloved, did, in effect, sing this melos in God's vineyard, when he beheld Jerusalem, and wept over it, (Luke xix. 41.) and had reference to it in the parable of the vineyard: (Matt. xxv. 33.) only here the vineyard is in the vine, there in the husbandman. Here is:

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

II. The disappointment of his just expectations from them; He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and a great deal of reason he had for that expectation. Note, God expects vineyard-fruit from those that enjoy vineyard-privileges; not leaves only, as Mark xi. 13. A bare profession, though ever so green, will not serve; there must be more than buds and blossoms; good purposes and good beginnings are good things, but not enough, there must be fruit; a good heart and a good life; vineyard-fruit, thoughts and affections, words and actions, agreeable to the Spirit, which is the fatness of the vineyard, (G. d. v. 22, 23.) answerable to the ordinances, which are the dressings of the vineyard, and according to the order of the rabbins, according to the season. Such fruit as this God expects from us, grapes, the fruit of the vine, with which they honour God and man; (Judg. ix. 13.) and his expectations are neither high nor hard, but righteous and very reasonable. Yet see how his expectations are frustrated; it brought forth wild grapes; not only no fruit at all, but bad fruit, worse than none; grapes of Sodom, Deut. xxxii. 32. 1. Wild grapes are the fruits of the corrupt nature; fruit according to the crab-stock, not according to the engrafted branch; from the root of bitterness, Heb. xii. 15. Where grace does not work, corruption will. 2. Wild grapes are hypocritical performances in religion, that look like grapes, but are sour or bitter; and are so far from being pleasing to God, that they offend him, and are an occasion of his anger to others, ch. iii. 11. Counterfeit grapes are wild grapes. 3. An appeal to themselves, whether, upon the whole, God must not he justified, and they condemned, v. iii. 4. And now the case is plainly stated, inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men ofJudah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard. This implies that God was blamed by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, the judges or rulers of the place, for not doing their duty in preserving the vineyard. It supposes that he was accused of forbad doing good, and not allowing evil; and that the judgment of their adversaries was adverse, for not doing justice, as they accused him; and that they themselves were so far from doing justice, that there was a question between them and him, but the equity was so plain on his side, that he could venture to put the decision of the controversy to their own consciences; "Let any inhabitant of Jerusalem, any man of Judah, that has but a particle of conscience, or any man, who in his heart and conscience, speaks his mind impartially in this matter," Here is a challenge to any man to show, 1. Any instance wherein God had been wanting to them; What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? He speaks of the external means of fruitfulness, and such as might be expected from the dresser of a vineyard, from which the wild grapes are spoken of, and which backsliders may take root in; he asks whether they did not bring forth wild grapes. What ought to have been done more? (so it may be read.) They had every thing requisite for instruction and direction in their duty, for the quickening of them to it, and putting of them in mind of it; no inducements were wanting to persuade them to it, but all arguments were used, proper to work either upon hope or fear; and they had all the opportunities they could desire for the performance of their duty, the new-moons, and the sabbaths, and solemn feasts; they had the scriptures, the lively oracles, a standing ministry in the priests and Levites, beside what was extraordinary in the prophets. No nation had statutes and judgments so righteous. 2. Note, it could any tolerable excuse be offered for their walking thus contrary to God; Wherefore, what reason can be given why it should bring forth wild grapes, when I looked for grapes? Note, The wickedness of those that profess religion, and enjoy the means of grace, is the most unreasonable, unaccountable thing in the world, and the whole blame of it must lie upon the sinners themselves; if they scorner, they alone shall bear it, and shall not have a word to say for themselves in the judgment of the great day. God will prove his own ways equal, and the sinner's ways unequal. 4. Their doom read, and a righteous sentence passed upon them for their bad conduct toward God; (v. 3, 6.) And now go to; since nothing can be offered in excuse of the crime, or arrest of the judgment, I will tell you what I am now determined to do to my vineyard. I will be vexed and troubled with it no more; since it will be good for nothing, it shall be good for nothing; in short, it shall cease to be a vineyard, and be turned into a wilderness; the church of the Jews shall be unburied, their charter shall be taken away, and they shall become to-ammminot my people. 1. They shall no longer be distinguished as a peculiar people, but be accounted one in common with the rest of the world, and then it will soon be eaten up, and become as bare as other ground. They mingled themselves with the nations, and therefore were justly scattered among them. They shall no longer be protected as God's people, but left exposed. God will not only suffer the wall to go to decay, but he will break it down, will remove all their defences from them; and then they become an easy prey to their enemies, who had long waited for an opportunity to do them a mischief, and will now treat them down, and trample upon them. 3. They shall no longer have the face of a vineyard, the form and shape of a church and commonwealth, but shall be levelled and hid waste. This was fulfilled when Jerusalem for their taxes was ploughed as a field, Mic. iii. 12. No more bread shall they eat, and wine shall they drink, and oil rub, Mic. vii. 10. The graven things shall fall, the graven and molten image shall be broken, Hos. vii. 34.
understanding, all grown over with thorns. 5. That
which completes its wo, is, that the dew of heaven
shall be better, and that the key of the clouds,
will command them that they rain no rain upon it;
and that alone is sufficient to turn it into a desert.
Note, God, in a way of righteous judgment, denies
his grace to those that have long received it in vain.
The sum of all is, that they who would not bring
forth good fruit, should bring forth none. The curse
of barrenness is the punishment of the sin of barren-
ness, as Mk. 12. 9. That has his accomplishment,
in part, in the destruction of Jerusalem by the
Chaldeans, its full accomplishment in the final rejection
of the Jews, and has its frequent accomplishment in
the departure of God’s Spirit from those persons
who have long resisted him, and striven against
him, and the removal of his gospel from those places
that have been long a reproach to it, while it has
been an honour to them. 6. That is no loss to God to
lay his vineyard waste; for he can, when he pleases,
turn a wilderness into a fruitful field; and when he
does thus dismantle a vineyard, it is but as he did
by the garden of Eden, which, when man had by
sin forfeited his place in, was soon levelled with
common soil.

V. The explanation of this parable, or a key to
it, (v. 7;) where we are told, 1. What is meant by
the wild grapes and fig trees, that were the
bed of the people, incorporated in one church and
commonwealth; and what by the vines, the pleasant
plants, the plants of God’s pleasure, which he had
been pleased in, and delighted in doing good to;
they are the men of Judah; these he had dealt
graciously with, and from them he expected suitable
returns. 2. What is meant by the grapes that were
expected, and the wild grapes that were procured.
He looked for judgment and righteousness, that
the people should be honest in all their dealings,
and the magistrates should strictly administer justice;
this might reasonably be expected among a people
that had such excellent laws and rules of justice
given them: (Dent. iv. 8.) but it was quite other-
wise; instead of judgment there was the cruelty
of the oppressors, and instead of righteousness the
cry of the oppressed; every thing was carried on
in discord and noise, and not by equity, and according
to the merits of the case. It is said with a people,
when wickedness has usurped the place of judg-
ment, Eccl. iii. 16. It is very sad with a soul, when,
instead of the grapes of humility, meekness, pa-
tience, love, and contempt of the world, which God
looks for, there are the wild grapes of pride, pas-
sion, discontent, malice, and contempt of God; in-
stead of the grapes of praying and praising, the
wild grapes of cursing and swearing, which are a
great offence to God. Some of the ancients apply
tis to the Jews in Christ’s time, among whom God
looked for righteousness, that they should have re-
ceived and embraced Christ, but beheld, a cry, that
cry, Cruelly him, cruelly him.

8. Wo unto them that join house to house,
that lay field to field, till there be no
place, that they may be placed alone in the
midst of the earth! 9. In mine ears, said
the Lord of hosts, Of a truth, many houses
shall be desolate, even great and fair, with-
out inhabitant. 10. Yea, ten acres of vine-
yard shall yield one bath, and the seed of a
bomber shall yield an ephah. 11. Wo unto
them that rise up early in the morning, that
they may follow strong drink; that continue
until night, till wine inflame them! 12. And
the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe,
and wine, are in their feasts: but they re-
gard not the work of the Lord, neither con-
sider the operation of his hands. 13. There-
fore my people are gone into captivity,
because they have no knowledge; and their
honourable men are famished, and their mul-
titude dried up with thirst. 14. Therefore
shall 118 hath enlarged herself, and opened
her mouth without measure; and their glory
and their multitude, and their pomp, and he
that rejoiceth, shall descend into it. 15
And the mean man shall be brought down,
and the mighty man shall be humbled, and
the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled. 16.
But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in
judgment, and God, that is holy, shall be
sanctified in righteousness. 17. Then shall
the lambs feed after their manner, and the
waste places of the fat ones shall strangers
eat.

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

I. Here is a wo to those who set their hearts
upon the wealth of the world, and place their hap-
piness in that, and increase it to themselves by inde-
rect and unlawful means, (v. 8.) who join house
to house, and lay field to field, till there be no
room for any body to live by them; could they
succeed, they would be placed alone in the midst
of the earth, would monopolize possessions and pro-
ferments, and engross all profits and employments
to themselves. Not that it is a sin for those who
have a house and a field, if they have wherewithal
to purchase another; but their fault is, 1. That they
are inordinate in their desires to enrich themselves,
and make it their whole care and business to raise
an estate as if they had nothing to do, nothing to
seek, nothing to do, in this world, but that. They
never know when they have enough, but the more
they have, the more they would have; and, like the
daughters of the horseleech, they cry, Give, give;
you cannot enjoy what they have, nor do good with
it, being so intent on contriving and studying to
make it more. They must have variety of houses,
summer-houses, winter-houses, and a sumptuous
man’s house, or field, lie convenient to theirs;
Naboth’s vineyard to Ahab’s, they must have that
too, or they cannot be easy. Their fault is, 2. That
they are herein careless of others, may, and injurious
to them; they would live so as to let nobody live but
themselves; so that their insatiable covetings be-
gratified, they matter not what becomes of all about
them. What encroachments they make upon their
neighbour’s rights, what hardships they put upon
those that they have power over, or advantage
against, or what base and wicked arts they use to
heap up treasure to themselves. They would swell
so big as to fill all space, and yet are still unsatisfied.
Eccl. v. 10. As Alexander, who, when he had
conquered the world, went because he had
not another world to conquer: Defectus terrarumnon
impetuous avarice—If the whole earth were monopolized, avarice would be thirst for more. What, will you be placed alone in the midst of the earth? (so some read it.) Will you be so foolish as to desire it, when we have so much need of the service of others, and for the help of each other? Will you be so foolish as to expect that the earth should be forsaken for us, (Job xviii. 4.) when it is by multitudes that the earth is to be replenished? Is property ever so vast that it can be exhaustible?—Was the wide world created merely for you? Lyra.

Now that which is threatened, as the punishment of this sin, is, that neither the houses nor the fields they were so greatly off, should turn to any use. (Isa. xix. 10.) God whispered it to the prophet in his car, as he speaks in a like case; (ch. xxii. 14.) It was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts; (as God told Samuel a thing in his car, 1 Sam. ix. 13.) he thought he heard it still saunding in his car; but he proclaims it as he ought to do, upon the house-tops, Matth. x. 27. (1.) That the houses they were so fond of, should be untenantable, should stand long empty, and so should yield them no rent, and go out of repair: Many houses shall be desolate, the people that should dwell in them being cut off by sword, famine, or pestilence, or carried into captivity; or, trade being dead, and poverty coming upon the country like an armed man, those that had been house-keepers, were forced to become lodgers, or shift for their maintenance. (2.) But the million and half of houses there would not invite tenants, and (there being a scarcity of tenants) might be taken at low rates, shall stand empty without inhabitants. God created not the earth in vain: he formed it to be inhabited, ch. xlv. 18. But men's projects are often frustrated, and what they frame, answers not the intention. We have a saying, That fools build houses for their children, but the wise man builds for no man to live in. God has many ways to empty the most populous cities. (2.) That the fields they were so fond of should be unfruitful; (v. 10.) Ten acres of vineyard shall yield only such a quantity of grapes as will make but one bath of wine, which was about eight gallons; and the seed of an homer, a bushel's sowing of ground, shall yield but an ephah of meal. This was the tenth part of an homer, so that through the barrenness of the ground, or the unsoulsalability of the weather, they should not have more than a tenth part of their seed again. Note, Those that set their hearts upon the world, will justly be disappointed in their expectations from it.

11. Here is a wo to those that doth upon the pleasures and delights of sense, v. 11, 12. Sensuality ruins men as certainly as worldliness and oppression. As Christ pronounced a wo against those that are rich, so also against those that laugh now, and are full, (Luke vi. 24, 25.) and are cast down suddenly, Luke xvi. 19. Observe, 1. Who the sinners are against whom this wo is denounced; (1.) They are such as are given to drink, they take it to excess, have their hearts upon it, and overcharge themselves with it. They rise early to follow strong drink, as husbandsmen and tradesmen do to follow their employments; as if they were afraid of losing time from that which is the greatest mispending of time. Whereas commonly they that are drunken, are drunken in the night, when they have despatched their business; and then are the most sensible, Motive, and give up themselves to the service of the flesh; for they sit at their cups all day, and continue till night, till wine inflame them—insane their lusts; chambering and wantonness follow upon rioting and drunkenness—insane their passions; for who but such have contentions and wounds without cause? Prov. xxix. 29—35. They make a perfect trade of drinking, nor do they seek the shelter of the night for this work of darkness, as men ashaamed of it, but count it a pleasure to riot in the day-time. See 2 Pet. ii. 13. (2.) They are such as are given to mirth; they have their feasts, and they are so merrily disposed, that they cannot dine or sup without music, musical instruments of all sorts, like David, (Amos vi. 5.) like Solomon; (Ecc. i. 8.) the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, must accompany the wine, that every sense may be gratified to a nicety: they take the timbrel and harp, Job xxxii. 12. The use of music is lawful in itself; but when it is excessive, when we set our hearts upon it, misspend time in it, so that it crowds our spiritual and divine pleasures, and draws our hearts away from God, then it turns into sin to us. (3.) They are such as are not willing to use their mind to any thing that is serious; they regard not the work of the Lord, they observe not his power, wisdom, and goodness, in these creatures which they abuse, and subject to vanity, nor the bounty of his providence, in giving them these good things which they make the food and fuel of their lusts. God's judgments have already seized them, and they are under the tokens of his displeasure that they regard not, they consider not the hand of God in all these things; his hand is lifted up, but they will not see, because they will not disturb themselves in their pleasures, nor think what God is doing with them.

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

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

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

(3.) That the multitude should be cut off by famine and war; (v. 14.) Therefore hell has enlarged herself; Tophet, the common burying-place, proves too little; so many are there to be buried, that they shall be forced to enlarge it: the grave has opened her mouth without measure, never saying, It is enough, Prov. xxx. 15, 16. It may be understood of the place of the damned; luxury and sensuality fill those regions of darkness and horror; there they are terminated, all sorts, who have made a god of their belly, Luke xvi. 23. Phil. iii. 19.

(4.) That they should be humbled and abused, and all their honours laid in the dust. This will be done effectually by death and the grave; Their glory shall descend, not only to the earth, but into it; it shall not descend after them, (Ps. xlix. 17.) to stand
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them in any stead on the other side death, but it shall die and be buried with them; poor glory, which will thus wither! Did they glory in their numbers? Their multitude shall go down to the pit, Ezek. xxxi. 18. 32. Did they glory in the figure they made? Their pomp shall be at an end; their shouts with which they triumphed, and were attended. Did they glory in their might? Death will turn it into mourning; he that revives and has effect, and never knows what it is to be serious, shall go thither where there is weeping and wailing. Thus the mean man and the mighty man meet together in the grave, and under mortifying judgments. Let a man be ever so high, death will bring him low, ever so mean, death will bring him lower; in the prospect of which, the eyes of the lofty shall now be humbled, and becomes those to look low, that most shortly be laid low.

3. What the fruit of these judgments shall be.

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

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

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

18. Wo unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-rope! 19. That say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it! 20. Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! 21. Wo unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! 22. Wo unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: 23. Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! 24. Therefore as the fire devourth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. 25. Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them: and the hills did tremble, and their carcases were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. 26. And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth: and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly. 27. None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken: 28. Whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind: 29. Their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions; yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it 30. And in that day they shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea; and if one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow; and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.

Here are,

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

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

1. Who are eagerly set upon sin, and violent in their sinful pursuits; (v. 18.) who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, who take as much pains to take the cattle that draw in a team, who put themselves to the stretch for the gratifying of their inordinate appetites, and to humour a base lust, of fer violence to nature itself. They think themselves as sure ofcompassing their wicked projects, as if they were pulling it to them with strong cart-ropes: but they will find themselves disappointed, for they will prove cords of vanity, which will break when they come to any stress; for the righteous Lord will cut in sunder the cords of the wicked, Ps. cxxxix. 4. Job iv. 8. Prov. xxii. 8. They are by long custom
and confirmed habits, so hardened in sin, that they cannot get clear of it: those that sin through infirmity, are drawn away by sin; those that sin presumptuously, draw it to them, in spite of the opposition of Providence and the checks of conscience. Some by sin understand the punishment of sin; they will God's judgments upon their own heads, as it was upon their ancestors. 

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

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

4. Who, though they are guilty of such gross mistakes as these, have a great opinion of their own judgments, and value goodness, and know what they are their understanding; (v. 21.) they are wise in their own eyes; they think themselves able to discern and judge the reproofs and convictions of God's word, and to evade and elude both the searches and the reaches of his judgments; that they can outwit Infinite Wisdom, and counter-tune Providence itself. Or, it may be taken more generally; God resists the proud, those particular distinctions are perhaps exceeded of their own wisdom, and lean to their own understanding; such must become fools, that they may be truly wise, or else, at their end, they shall appear to be fools before all the world.

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

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

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

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

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

3. Whence this ruin should come; (v. 25.) it is destruction from the Almighty. (1.) The justice of God appoints it; for that is the anger of the Lord
which is kindled against his people, his necessary vindication of the honour of his holiness and authority. (2.) The power of God effects it: he hath stretched forth his hand against them; that hand which had many a time been stretched out for them against their enemies, is now stretched out against them, at full length, and in its full vigour: and who knows the power of his anger? Whether they are sensible of it or not, it is God that has smitten them, has blasted their vine, and made it wither.

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

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

When God designs the ruin of a provoking people,

(1.) He can send a great way off for instruments to be employed in it; he can raise forces from afar, and summon them from the end of the earth to attend his service, v. 1. Those who know him most are those. He is not used to fulfill his counsel, when, by reason of their distance, they can scarcely be supposed to have any ends of their own to serve. If God set up his standard, he can incline men's hearts to enlist themselves under it, though perhaps they know not why or wherefore. When the Lord of hosts is pleased to make a general muster of the forces he has at his command, he has a great army in an instant, Le 2, 3. Not a sound, a trumpet, or beat a drum, to give them notice, or to animate them; no, he does but hiss to them, or rather whistle to them, and that is enough; they hear that, and that puts courage into them. Note, God has all the creatures at his beck.

(2.) He can make them come into the service with incredible expedition: Behold, they shall come with swift strides, v. 2. The words do not sound a trumpet, or beat a drum, to give them notice, or to animate them; no, he does but hiss to them, or rather whistle to them, and that is enough; they hear that, and that puts courage into them. Note, God has all the creatures at his beck.

(2.) They dare upon them in the service with amazing forwardness and fury. This is described here in very elegant and lively expressions, v. 27—30. [1.] Though their marches be very long, yet none among them shall be weary, so desirous shall they be to engage, that they shall forget their weakness, and make no complaints of it. [2.] Though the way be rough, and perhaps embarrassed by the usual policies of war, yet none among them shall stumble, but all the difficulties in their way shall easily be got over. [3.] Though they be forced to keep constantmarch, none shall weary; their intent shall be to upon their work, in prospect of having the plunder of the city for their pains. [4.] They shall not desire any rest or relaxation; they shall not put off their clothes, nor loose the girdle of their loins, but shall always have their belts on, and swords by their sides. [5.] They shall not meet with the least hindrance to retard their march, or oblige them to halt; not a wheel of them shall be broken, which they must stay to mend, as Josh. ix. 13. [6.] Their arms and ammunition shall all be fixed, and in good posture; their arrows sharp, to wound deep, and all their bows bent, none unsprung, for they expect to be seen in action. [7.] Their horses and chariots of war are all fit for service; their horses so strong, so hardly, that their hoofs shall be like flint, far from being bent or made tender by their long march; and the wheels of their chariots not broken, or battered, or out of repair, but swift like a whirlwind, turning round so strongly upon their axle-trees. [8.] All the soldiers shall be bold and daring; (v. 29.) their roaring, or shouting, before a battle, shall be like a lion, who with his roaring animates himself, and terrifies all about him. They who would not hear the voice of the trumpet, and therefore do not their march against their charoms, shall be made to hear the voice of their enemies roaring against them, and shall not be able to turn a deaf ear to it; they shall roar like the roaring of the sea in a storm; it rears, and threatens to swallow up, as the lion roars, and threatens to tear in pieces. [9.] There shall not be the least prospect of victor or success; the enemy shall come in like a flood, and there shall be none to lift up a standard against him; he shall seize the prey, and none shall deliver it, woe shall be able to deliver it, may, none shall so much as dare to attempt the deliverance of it, but shall give it up for lost. Let the distresht look which way they will, every thing appears dismal; for if God bring us on, how can any creature smile? First, Look round to the ends of the earth, and see how that may be a land of light, and the joy of the whole earth, and behold, darkness and sorrow, all frightful, all mourning, nothing hopeful. Secondly, Look up to heaven, and there the light is darkened, where one would expect to have found it. If the light be darkened in the heavens, how great is that darkness! If God hide his face, no marvel the heavens hide theirs, and appearing gloomy, Job xxxiv. 20. It is our wisdom, by keeping a good conscience, to keep all clear between us and heaven, that we may have light from above, when clouds and darkness are round about us.

CHAP. VI.

Hitherto, it should seem, Isaiah had prophesied as a can didate, having only a virtual and implicit commission but here we have him (if I may so speak) solemnly and in a formal and explicit commission, v. 1. Not only did he receive a commission in his hands, but, perhaps, having seen little success of his ministry, he began to think of giving it up; and therefore God saw fit to renew his commission here in this chapter, in such a manner as might add to the encouragement of his zeal and industry, and to excite in him the execution of it, though he seemed to labour in vain. In this chapter, we have, 1. A very awful vision which Isaiah saw of the glory of God, (v. 1 - 4.) the terror it put him into, (v. 5., 6.) and the relief given him against that terror by an assurance of the pardon of his sins, v. 6, 7. 2. A very awful com-
1. In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 2. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3. And one cried unto another, saying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. 4. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

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

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

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

I. See God upon his throne, and that throne high and lifted up, not only above other thrones, as it transcends them, but over other thrones, as it rules and commands them. Isaiah saw not Jehovah—this man has seen that (no man has seen that, but he that sees it), but Adonai—his dominion; he saw the Lord Jesus; so this vision is explained, (John xxi. 41.) that Isaiah now saw Christ's glory, and spake of him, which is an incontestable proof of the divinity of our Saviour. He it is, who, when, after his resurrection, he sat down on the right hand of God, did sit down where he was before, John xvii. 5. See the rest of the Eternal Mind; Isaiah saw the Lord sitting, Ps. xxix. 10. See the sovereignty of the Eternal Monarch; he sits upon a throne, a throne of glory, before which we must worship, a throne of government, under which we must subject ourselves, to which we must submit. This throne is high, and lifted up above all competition and contradiction.

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

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

Special notice is taken of their wings, (and of no other part of their appearance,) because of the use they made of them; which is designed for instruction to us. They had each of them six wings, not stretched upward, (as those whom Ezekiel saw, ch. i. 11.) but, 1. Four were made use of for covering, as the wings of a fowl, sitting, are; with the two upper wings, next the head, they covered their faces; and with the two lower wings they covered their feet, or lower parts. This beaks their great humility and reverence in their attendance upon God, for he is greatly feared in the assembly of those parts, Ps. lxix. 7. They not only cover their feet, those members of the body which are less honourable, (1 Cor. xii. 23.) but even their faces; though angels' faces, doubtless, are much fairer than those of the children of men, (Acts vi. 15.) yet, in the presence of God, they cover them, because they cannot bear the dazzling lustre of the divine glory, and because, being conscious of an infinite distance from the divine perfection, they are ashamed to show their faces before the holy God, who charges even his angels with folly, if they should offer to vie with him, Job iv. 18. If angels be thus reverent in their attendance on God, with what godly fear should we approach his throne! Else we do not the will of God as the angels do it.

Moses, when he was on the mountain, which God took the veil off his face, 2 Cor. iii. 18. 2. Two were made use of for flight; when they are sent on God's errands, they fly swiftly, (Dan. ix. 21.) more swiftly with their own wings than if they flew on the wings of the wind. This teaches us to do the work of God with cheerfulness and expedition. Do angels come upon the wing from heaven, as they shall do to the earth, and shall not soar upon the wing from earth to heaven, to share with them in their glory? Luke xx. 36.

IV. Hear the anthem, or song of praise, which the angels sing to the honour of him that sits on the throne, v. 3. Observe, 1. How this song was sung; with zeal and fervency they cried aloud; and with unanimity they cried one to another, or with one another; they sang alternately, but in concert, and
without the least jarring voice to interrupt the harmony. 2. What the song was; it is the same with that which is sung by the four living creatures, Rev. iv. 8. Note. (1.) Praising God always was, and will be, to eternity, the work of heaven, and the constant employment of blessed spirits above, Ps. lxxxiv. 4. (2.) The church above is the same in its praises; there is no change of times, or notes, there.

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

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

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

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

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

1. The consternation that the prophet was put into by the vision which he saw of the glory of God; (v. 5.) Then said I, Wo is me! I should have said, "Blessed art thou, who hast been thus highly favoured, highly honoured, and dignified, for a time, with the sight of the glory of God," and then the prophet, which concern the administration of God's kingdom among men. Now here we have,

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new: for the sinfulness of sin is its contrariety to the holy nature of God, and, upon that account, especially, it should appear both hateful and frightful to us. The impurity of our lips ought to be the grief of our souls, for by our words we shall be justified or condemned. (2.) That we dwell among those who are so too. We have reason to lament it, that not we ourselves only are polluted, but that the nature and race of mankind are so, the disease is hereditary and epidemic; which is so far from lessening our guilt, that it rather increases our grief, especially considering that we have not done what we might have done for the cleansing of the pollution of other people's lips; nor, we have rather feared. We have reason to be abashed, as Joseph in Egypt learned the courtier's oath, Gen. xlii. 16. "I dwell in the midst of a people, who by their impudent sinnings are pulling down desolating judgments upon the land, which I, who am a sinner, too justly may expect to be involved in."

2. What gave occasion for these sad reflections at this time? Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. He saw God's sovereignty to be incontestable, he is the King; and his power irresistible, he is the Lord of hosts; these are comforting truths to God's people, and yet they ought to strike an awe upon us. Note. A believing sight of God's glorious majesty should affect us all with reverence and awe. Nor is it possible for us to search God in the sense of that infinite distance that there is between us and God, and our own sinfulness and wretchedness before him, and to be afraid of his displeasure. We are undone, if there be not a Mediator between us and this holy God, 1 Sam. vi. 20. Isaiah was thus humbled, to prepare him for the honour he was now to be called to as a prophet. Note, These are the very words, which are written in heaven, in the places, to which he was to be sent. He is to see with his own eyes, and are made deeply sensible of their own weakness and unworthiness.

II. The silencing of the prophet's fears by the good words, and comfortable words, with which the angel answered him, v. 6, 7. One of the seraphim immediately flew to him, to purify him, and so to pacify him. Note. 1. God has strong consolations ready for holy mourners; they that humbly present themselves in penitential shame and fear shall soon be encouraged and exalted; they that are struck down with the visions of God's glory, shall soon be raised up again with the visits of his grace; he that tears will heal. 2. Angels are ministering spirits for the good of the saints, for their spiritual good. Here was one of the chief of his spirits, who advocated his cause before the throne of God's glory; to be a messenger of his grace to a good man; and so well pleased was he with the office that he came flying to him.

To our Lord Jesus himself, in his agony, there appeared an angel from heaven, strengthening him, Luke xxii. 43. Here is, (1.) A comfortable sign given him of the purging of the sins of his sin. The seraph brought a live coal from the altar, and touched his lips with it: not to hurt them, but to heal them; not to cantelize, but to cleanse them; for there were purifications by fire, as well as by water, and the filth of Jerusalem was purged by the spirit of burning, ch. iv. 4. The blessed Spirit works as fire, Mat. iii. 11. The seraph, being himself kindled with a divine fire, put life into the prophet, to make him zealous affected, for the way to purge the lips from the uncleanness of sin, is, to fire the soul with the love of God. This live coal was taken off from the altar, either the altar of incense, or that of burnt-offerings; for they had both of them fire burning on them continually. Nothing is powerful to cleanse and comfort the soul, but what is taken from Christ's satisfaction, and the intercession he ever lives to make in the virtue of that satisfaction. It must be a coal from his altar, that must put life into us, and be our peace; it will not be done with strange fire.

(2.) An explication of this sign. Let this coal touch thy lips, to assuredly signifie, that the guiltiness is taken away, and thy sin purged. The guilt of thy sin is removed by pardoning mercy, the guilt of thy tongue-sins; thy corrupt disposition to sin is removed by renewing grace; and therefore nothing can hinder thee from being accepted with God as a worshipsper, in concert with the holy angels, or from being employed for God as a messenger to the nations; and those only who have not yet purged from an evil conscience, are prepared to serve the living God, Heb. ix. 14. The taking away of sin is necessary to our speaking with confidence and comfort, either to God in prayer, or from God in preaching; nor are any so fit to display to others the riches and power of gospel-grace, as those who have themselves tasted the sweetness, and felt the influence of that grace; and those shall have their sin taken away, who complain of it as a burthen, and see themselves in danger of being undone by it.

III. The renewing of the prophet's mission, v. 8. Here is a communication between God and Isaiah about this matter. Those that would assist others in their correspondence with God, must not themselves be unclean, nor be in the least a polluted nation. Who should God speak by us, if we never heard him speaking to us, or that we should be accepted as the mouth of others to God, if we never spoke to him heartily for ourselves? Observe here,

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

Observe, (1.) Who it is that is consulting; it is the Lord; God in his glory, whom he saw upon the throne high and lifted up. It puts an honour upon the ministry, that, when God would send a prophet to speak in his name, he appeared in all the glories of the upper world: ministers are the ambassadors of the King of kings; how mean soever they are, he who sends them is great; it is God in three persons, who makes them to us. As Gen. ii. 7. Man shall make—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; they all concur, as in the creating, so in the redeeming, and governing, of man. Ministers are ordained in the same name into which all Christians are baptized.

(2.) What the consultation is; Whom shall I send? And who will go? Some think it refers to the particular message of wrath against Israel, v. 9, 10. This would be willing to go on such a melancholy errand, on which they will go in the bitterness of their souls? Ezek. iii. 14. But I rather take it more largely, for all those messages which he was intrusted to deliver, in God's name, to that people, in which that hardening work was by no means the primary intention, but a secondary effect of them, 2 Cor. ii. 16. Whom shall I send? Intimating that the business was such as required a choice and well-accomplished messenger, Jer. xlix. 19. God now appeared, attended with holy angels, and yet asks, Whom shall I send? For he would send them a prophet from among their brethren, Heb. ii. 5. Note, [1.] It is the unspeakable favour of God to us, that he is pleased to send us his mind by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid, and who, in themselves concerned in the messages they bring
They are workers together with God, who are sinners and sufferers together with us. [3.] It is a rare thing to find one who is fit to go for God, and to carry his messages to the children of men; Whom shall I send? Who is sufficient? Such a degree of courage for God, and concern for the souls of men, as is necessary to make a man faithful, and withal such an insight into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, as is necessary to make a man skilful, are seldom to be met with. Such an interpreter of the mind of God is one of a thousand, Job xxxiii. 23. [3.] None are allowed to go for God but those who are sent by him; he will own none but those whom he appoints, Rom. x. 15. It is Christ's work to put men into the ministry, 1 Tim. i. 5. They that sow are out of the world; then said I, Here am I, send me. He was to go on a melancholy errand; the office seemed to go a begging, and every body declined it, and yet Isaiah offered himself to the service. It is an honour to be singular in appearing for God, Judges v. 7. We must not say, "I would go, if I thought I should have good success;" but, "I will go, and leave the success to God; here am I, send me." Isaiah had been himself in a melancholy frame, (2.) full of doubts and fears; but now that he had the assurance of the pardon of his sin, the clouds were blown over, and he was fit for service, and forward to it. What he says bespeaks, (1.) His readiness; "Here am I; a volunteer, not pressed into the service." Behold me; so the word is. God says to us, Behold me, (ch. xvi. 1.) and, Here am I, (ch. lviii. 8.) even before we call: let him do call. (2.) His resolution; "Here I am, ready to encounter the greatest difficulties. I have set my face as a flint." Compare this with ch. 1. 4—7. (3.) His referring himself to God; "Send me whither thou wilt; make what use thou pleasest of me. Send me; Lord, give me commission and full instruction; send me, and then, no doubt, thou wilt stand by me." It is a great comfort to those whom God sends, that they go for God, and may therefore speak in his name, as having authority; and be assured that he will bear them out. 9. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. 10. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. 11. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate; 12. And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. 13. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a thistle-tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves, so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.

"God takes Isaiah at his word, and here sends him on a strange errand to foretell the ruin of his people, and even to repump them for that ruin; to prepare their minds, that, by the abuse of it, would be to them a snare of death unto death. And this was to be a type and figure of the state of the Jewish church, the days of the Messiah, when they should obstinately reject the gospel, and should, thereupon, be rejected of God. These verses are quoted in part, or referred to, six times in the New Testament; which intimates, that, in gospel-times, these spiritual judgments would be most frequently inflicted; and though they make the least noise, and come not with such devastation, yet they are of all other the most dreadful. Isaiah is here given to understand these four things:

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

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

3. That the consequence of this would be their utter ruin, v. 11, 12. The prophet had nothing to object against the justice of this sentence, nor does he refuse to go upon such an errand, but asks, "Lord, how long?" (an abrupt question) Shall it always be thus? Must I and other prophets always be carrying this sentence upon them, in God's name, and sealing them under it, and his preaching had a tendency to it, recking some asleep in security, to whom it was a lovely song, and making others more outrageous, to whom it was such a reproach, that they were not able to bear it. Some looked upon the word as a privy, and their convictions were smothered by it; (Jer. vii. 4.) others were stirred up to more profligacy, and their corruptions were exasperated by it.

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

4. That yet a remnant should be reserved to be the monuments of mercy, v. 15. This was so in the last destruction of the Jewish nation; (Rom. xi. 5.) At this present time there is a remnant, for so it was written in their law, as a determined number, but a very small number, in comparison with the multitude that should perish in their unbelief; it is that which under the law, was God's proportion; they shall be consecrated to God as the tithes were, and shall be for his service and honour. Concerning this tithe, this saved remnant, we are here told, (1.) That they shall return, (ch. vii. 3, 5.) The sin and sinfulness of the land shall return out of captivity to their own land. God will turn them and they shall be turned. (2.) That they shall be eaten, shall be accepted of God, as the tithe was, which was meat in God's house, Mal. iii. 10. The saving of this remnant shall be meat to the faith and hope of those that wish well to God's kingdom. (3.) That they shall be like a timber that springeth out of the wood, which has life, though it has no leaves; as a tall-tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, even then when they cast their leaves: so this remnant, though they may be stript of their outward prosperity, and share with others in common calamities, yet they shall recover themselves as a tree in the spring, and flourish again; though they fall, they shall not be utterly cut down, there is hope of a tree, though it be cut down, that it will sprout again, Job xiv. 7. (4.) That this distinguished remnant shall be the stay and support of the public interests: the holy seed in the soul is the substance of the man; a principle of grace, reigning in the heart, will keep life there; he that is born of God, has his seed remaining in him, John iii. 5. In the holy seed in the land he shall live. It is the substance of the land, kept to the people to the end of days, and bears up the fillers of it, Ps. lxxv. 3. See ch. i. 9. Some read the foregoing clause with this, thus: As the support at Shallecheth is in the elms and the oaks, so the holy seed is the substance thereof; as the trees that grow on either side of the causeway (the raised way, or terrace-walk, that leads from the king's palace to the temple, (1 Kings iv. 15.) to the gate of Shallecheth, 1 Chron. xxvii. 16.) support the causeway by keeping up the earth, which would otherwise be crumbling away; so the small residue of religious, serious, praying, people, are the support of the state, and help to keep things together, and save them from going to decay. Some make the holy seed to be Christ; the Jewish nation was therefore saved from utter ruin, because out of it, as concerning the flesh, Christ was to come, Rom. ix. 5. Destroy it not, for that blessing wuxs in it, (2. Cor. xiii. 8.) and when that blessing was come, it was soon destroyed. Now the consideration of this is designed for the support of the prophet in his work. Though far the greater part should perish in their unbelief, yet so some of his words should be a savour of life unto life. Ministers do not wholly lose their labour, if they be but instrumental to save one poor soul.

CHAP. VII.

This chapter is an occasional sermon, in which the prophet sings both of mercy and judgment to those that did not perceive or understand either; he piped unto them, but they danced not; mourned unto them, but they wept not.

Here is, 1. The consolation that Ahaz was upon an attempt upon the confederate forces of Syria and Israel against Jerusalem, v. 1, 2. II. The assurance which God, by the prophet, sent him for his encouragement, that the attempt should be defeated, and Jerusalem should be preserved, v. 3-9. III. The confirmation of this by a sign which God gave to Ahaz, when he refused to ask one, referring to Christ, and our redemption by him, v. 10, 11. IV. A threatening of the great desolation that God would bring upon Ahaz and his kindred done by the Assyrians, notwithstanding their escape from this present storm, because they went on still in their wickedness, v. 17, 25. And this is written both for our comfort and for our admonition.

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

The prophet Isaiah had his commission renewed in the year that king Uzziah died, ch. vi. 1. Jotham his son reigned, and reigned with sixteen years: st.
that time, no doubt, Isaiah prophesied as he was commanded, and yet we have not in this book any of his prophecies dated in the reign of Jotham; but this which is put first, was in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham. Many excellent useful sermons he preached, which were not left and published upon record; for if all that was memorable had been written, the world could not have contained the books of his prophecies.

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

And God sometimes makes one wicked nation a scourge to another; but judgment ordinarily begins at the house of God.

The great distress that Ahaz and his court were in, when they received advice of this design; It was told the house of David that Syria and Ephraim had signed a league against Judah, v. 2. This degenerate royal family is called the house of David, to put us in mind of that article of God's covenant with David, If his children forsake my law, I will chasten their transgression with the rod; but my loving-kindness will I not utterly take away; which is remarkably fulfilled in this chapter, Ps. lxxix. 30. News being brought that the two armies of Syria and Israel were joined, and had taken the field, the court, the city, and the country, were troubled; they were alarmed, because they were moved with fear, and then no wonder that the heart of his people was so, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind; they were tossed and shaken; and put into a great disorder and confusion, were wandering and uncertain in their counsels, hurried hither and thither, and could not fix in any steady resolution; they yielded to the storm, and gave up all for gone, concluding it in vain to make any resistance. Now that which caused this fright, was, the sense of guilt, and the weakness of their faith; they had made God their Enemy, and knew not how to make him their Friend, and therefore their fears tyrannized over them; while those whose consciences are kept void of offence, and whose hearts are fixed, trusting in God, need not be afraid of evil tidings; they were moved with fear, 2 Kings xx. 19, 20. Ahaz, in his distress, trusted to the shaking of a leaf. Lev. xxvi. 36.

The orders and directions given to Isaiah to go and encourage Ahaz in his distress; not for his own sake, (he deserved to hear nothing from God but words of terror, which might add affliction to his grief,) but because he was a son of David, and kindred to the kingdom, and that he was called of God a prophet of Jehovah, Isa. xxiv. 2. He was sent, it seems, to do this for Ahaz's sake, who must not be forgotten, and for his people's sake, who must not be abandoned, but would be encouraged if Ahaz were. Observe,

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

He commanded him to take a little son with him, because he carried a sermon in his name, Shall a remnant shall return. The prophets sometimes recorded what they preached, in the significant names of their children, (as Hos. i. 4, 6, 9.) therefore Isaiah's children are said to be for signs, ch. viii. 18. This son was so called, for the encouragement of those of God's people who were cowed captive, and where they thought it would be all over, at least a remnant of them, which is more than we can pretend to merit; yet, at this time, God was better than his word; for he took care not only that a remnant should return, but the whole number of those whom the confederate forces of Syria and Israel had taken prisoners, 2 Chron. xxviii. 13.

He directed him where he should find Ahaz, he was to meet with him in the court of the Lord's house, in the synagogues, or chapel, but at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, where he was, probably, with many of his servants about him, contriving how to order the water-works, so as to secure them to the city, or deprive the enemy of the benefit of them, (ch. xxvii. 9, 11.) 2 Chron. xxviii. 3, 4.) or giving some necessary directions for the fortifying the city as well as they could; and perhaps finding every thing in a very bad posture of defence, the conduit out of repair, as well as other things gone to decay, his fears increased, and he was now in greater perplexity than ever; therefore, Go meet him there. Note, God sometimes sends comforts to his people very seasonably, and, what time they are most afraid, encourages them to trust in him.

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

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

(2.) He must teach them to despise their enemies, not in pride, or security, or incogitancy, (nothing more dangerous than so to despise an enemy,) but in faith and dependence upon God. Ahaz's fear called them two powerful politic princes, for either of which reason and religion offer for the support; but if united, he must not look them in the face, or make head against them. (No, says the prophet, they are two tails of smoking firebrands; they are angry, they are fierce, they are furious, as firebrands, as fire-bells; and they make one another worse by being in a confederacy, as sticks of fire, put together, burn the more violently, but they are only so much the more danger to us, because there is some fire, but it may not be so much as was feared; their threatening will vanish into smoke; Psa. 21. 17.)
and Rezin king of Syria but a smoke; and (such are all the enemies of God’s church, smoking brars, that will soon be quenched) nay, they are but tails of smoking firebrands, in a manner burnt out already; their force is spent, they have consumed themselves with the heat of their own anger; you may put your faith on them, and tread them out.”

The two kingdoms of Syria and Israel were now near expiring. Note, The more we have an eye to God as a consuming Fire, the less reason we shall have to fear men, though they are ever so furious, nay, we shall be able to despise them as smoking firebrands.

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

1. That very thing which Ahaz thought most formidable, is made the ground of their defeat—and that was the depth of their designs and the height of their hopes; Therefore they shall be baffled and sent back with shame, because they have taken evil counsel against thee, which is an offence to God; these firebrands are a smoke in his nose, (ch. 1.xv. 5.) and therefore must be extinguished.

First, They are very slytful and malicious, and therefore they shall not prosper. Judah had done them no wrong, they had no pretence to quarrel with Ahaz; but, without any reason, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it. Note, Those that are vexatious, cannot expect to be prosperous; they say, Those that love me not, and are not their friends, will not prosper; yet, even those, indeed, that are their enemies, and are not their friends, may expect to do well. Secondly, They are very secure, and confident of success; they will vex Judah by going up against it; yet that is not all, they do not doubt but to make a breach in the wall of Jerusalem, wide enough for them to march their army in at; or they count upon discoursing or dividing the kingdom into two parts, one for the king of Israel, the other for the king of Syria; when one is gone, the other will make a breach in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal; some obscure person; it is uncertain whether a Syrian or an Israelite; so sure were they of gaining their point, that they divided the prey before they had caught it. Note, Those that are most scornful, are commonly less successful, for surely God scornt the scorners.

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

(4.) He must give them a prospect of the destruction of these enemies, at last, that were now such a terror to them. [1.] They should neither of them enlarge their dominions, nor push their conquests forward, but shall be pressed back, and driven out, and made two nations, and the head man of Damascus is Rezin; this he glories in, and this let him be content with, v. 8. The head city of Ephraim has long been Samaria, and the head man in Samaria is now Pekah the son of Remaliah; these shall be made to know their own, their bounds are fixed, and they shall not pass them, to make themselves masters of the land, and make the less the land of the Lord, and transport them their prey. Note, As God has appointed men the bounds of their habitation, (Acts xvii. 26.) so he has appointed princes the bounds of their dominion, within which they ought to confine themselves, and not encroach upon their neighbours’ rights. (2.) Ephraim, which perhaps was the more malicious and forward enemy of the two, should shortly be quite rootet out, and should be so far from seizing other people’s lands, that they should not be able to hold their own. Interpreters are much at a loss how to contemplate the sixty-five years within which Ephraim shall cease to be a people; for the captivity of the ten tribes was but eleven years after this; and some make it a mistake of the transcript, and think it should be read, within six and five years, just eleven. But it is hard to allow that. Others make it to be sixty-five years from the time that the prophet Amos first foretold the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes; and some late interpreters make it to look as far forward as the last prophecy by Ezekiel, which was about sixty-five years after this; then Ephraim was so broken, that it was no more a people. Now it was the greatest folly in the world for them to be ruining their neighbours, who were themselves marked for ruin, and so near to it. See what a prophet told them at this time, when they were triumphing over Judah, (2 Chron. xxviii. 10.) Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?

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

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

Here,

1. God, by the prophet, makes a gracious offer to Ahaz, to confirm the foregoing predictions, and his faith in them, by such sign or miracle as he should choose; (v. 10, 11.) Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God. See here the divine faithfulness and veracity; God tells us nothing but what he is able and ready to prove. See his wonderful descensions to the children of men, in that he is so willing to shew to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, Heb. vi. 17. He considers our frame, and the frame of the world in which we are not apt to require sensible proofs, which therefore he has favoured us with in sacramental signs and seals. Ahaz was a bad man, yet God is called the Lord his God, because he was a child of Abraham and David, and of the covenants made with them. See
now gracious God is even to the evil and unthankful: Ahaz is bid to choose his sign, as Gideon about the fleece; (Judg. vii. 37.) let him ask for a sign either in the air, or earth, or water, for God's power is the same in each.

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

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

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

1. "A sign in general of his good-will to Israel and to the house of David; you may conclude that he will deal well with you, and that you will not be forsaken of your God, how great seer your present distress and danger are; for of your nation, of your family, the Messiah is to be born, and you cannot be destroyed while that Blessing is in you; which shall be introduced. (1.) In a glorious manner; for whereas he has often been told that he should be born among you, I am now further to tell you, Behold he shall be born of a virgin which will signify both the divinity of the person of Jesus Christ, and which with which he shall be brought into the world: that he shall be an extraordinary person, for he shall not be born by ordinary generation, and that he shall be a holy thing, not stained with the common pollutions of the human nature, therefore incomestightly fit to have the throne of his father David given him."

Now this, though it was to be accomplished above 500 years after, was a most encouraging sign to the house of David, (and to them, under that title, this prophecy is directed, v. 13.) and an assurance that God would not cast them off. Ephraim did indeed envy Judah, (ch. xii. 13.) and sought the ruin of that kingdom, but could not prevail, for the sceptre should never depart from Judah till the coming of Shiloh, Gen. xlix. 10. Those whom God designs for the great salvation, may take that for a sign to them, that they shall not be swallowed up by the power of the enemy, nor by the travails of the world. The Messiah shall be introduced on a glorious errand, wrapped up in his glorious name; they shall call his name Immanuel—God with us, God in our nature, God at peace with us, in covenant with us. This was fulfilled in their calling him Jesus—a Saviour; (Math. i. 21—23.) for if he had not been Immanuel—God with us, he could not have been Jesus—a Saviour. Now this was a further sign of God's favour to the house of David and the tribe of Judah; for he that intended to work this great salvation among them, no doubt would work out for them all those other salvations which were to be the types and figures of this, and as it were proleptics to this. "Here is a sign for you, not in the depth, or in the height, but in the prophecy, in the promise, in the covenant made with David, which you are to believe, that the Lord your God was with you, and is with you, (ch. viii. 10.) God is with us, and (v. 8.) that your land is Immanuel's land. Let not the heart of the house of David be moved thus, (v. 2.) nor let Judah fear the setting up of the son of Baken, (v. 6.) for nothing can cut off the entail on the Son of David that shall be Immanuel." Note, The strongest confidences, in time of trouble, are these which are borrowed from Christ, our relation to him, our interest in him, and our expectations of him and from him.

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

2. Here is another sign in particular of the speed, destruction of these potent princes that were now a terror to Judah, v. 16. "Before this child so it should be read; this child which I have now in my arms, (he means not Immanuel, but Shear-jashub his own son, whom he was ordered to take with him for a sign, v. 3.) before this child shall be born, (and therefore not be the Messiah) nor shall he have dominion over the house of Jacob, (and those who saw what his present stature and forwardness were, would easily conjecture how long that would be,) before this child will be three or four years older, the land that thou abhorrest, these confederate forces of Israelites and Syrians, whom thou hast such an enmity to, and standest in such dread of, shall be forsaken of both their kings, both Pekah and Rezin;" who were in so close an alliance, that they seemed as if they were the kings
but of one kingdom. This was fully accomplished, for within two or three years after this, Hosea contested against Pekah, and slew him, (2 Kings xv. 29.) and before that, the king of Assyria took Damascus, and slew Rezin, 2 Kings xvi. 9. Nay, there was a present event, which happened immediately, and which this child carried the prediction of in his name, which was a pledge and earnest of this further event. Shear-jashub signifies, The remnant shall return, which doubtless points at the wonderful return of those 200,000 captives which Pekah and Rezin had carried away, who were brought back, not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. Read the story, 2 Chron. xxviii. 9, 10. The prophetic naming of this child, having thus had its accomplishment, no doubt this, which was further added concerning him, should have its accomplishment likewise, that Syria and Israel should be deprived of both their kings. One mercy from God encourages us to hope for another, if it engages us to prepare for another.

17. The Lord shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah: even the King of Assyria. 18. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria: 19. And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes. 20. In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard. 21. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a man shall nourish a young cow and two sheep: 22. And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk that they shall give, he shall eat butter: for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land. 23. And it shall come to pass in that day, that every place shall be, where there were 1 thousand vines at a thousand silverings, it shall even be for briers and thorns. 24. With arrows and with bows shall men come thither; because all the land shall become briers and thorns. 25. And on all hills that shall be dugged with the mattock, there shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns: but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle.

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

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

II. The enemy that should be employed as the instrument of this judgment, is the king of Assyria. Ahaz reposed strong confidence in that prince for help against the confederate powers of Israel and Syria, and minded the less what God said to him by his prophet for his encouragement, because he built much upon another, and took shelter in the king of Assyria, and had mainly promised to be his servant, if he would send him some succours; he had also made him a present of gold and silver, for which he drained the treasures both of church and state, 2 Kings xvi. 7, 8. Now God threatens that that king of Assyria, whom he made his stay instead of God, should become a scourge to him. He was so speedily; for when he came to his king, he strengthened him not: the reed not only broke under him, but ran into his hand, and pierced it, (2 Chron. xxviii. 20,) and from thenceforward the kings of Assyria were, for a long time, grieving thorns to Judah, and gave them a great deal of trouble. Note, The creature that we make our hope, our comfort, our shelter and refuge, the king of Assyria, not long after this, made himself master of the ten tribes, carried them captive, and laid their country waste, so as fully to answer the prediction here; and perhaps it may refer to that, as an explanation of v. 8, where it is foretold that Ephraim shall be broken, that it shall not be a people; and it is easy to suppose that the prophet, at v. 17. turns his speach to the country of Israel, denouncing God's judgments against him for invading Judah. But the expositors universally understand it of Ahaz and his kingdom. Now observe, 1. Summons given to the invaders; (v. 18.) The Lord shall whistle for the fly and the bee: See ch. v. 26. Enemies that seem as contemptible as a fly or a bee, and are as easily crushed; yet, when God pleases, they shall do his work as effectually as lions and young lions. Though they are as far distant from one another as the rivers of Egypt and the land of Assyria, yet they shall punctually meet to join in this work, when God commands their attendance; for when God has work to do, he will not be at a loss for instruments to do it with.

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

3. Great desolations made, and the country generally depopulated; (v. 20. The Lord shall have
the hair of the head, and beard, and feet: he shall sweep all away, as the ker, when he is cleansed, shall sweep away the filth of his feet: this also, even as he is: This is the razer which is hired; which God has hired, as if he had none of his own; but what he hires, and whom he employs in any service for him, he will pay for: see Ezek. xxxix. 18, 19. Or which Ahaz has hired for his assistance. God will make that to be an instrument of his destruction, which he hired into his service. Note. Many are beaten with the backs of them that they trust to, rather than to the arm of the Lord, and which they were at a great expense upon; when by faith and prayer they might have found cheap and easy succour in God.

4. The consequences of this general de population:

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

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

3. The breed of cattle shall be destroyed; so that they who used to eat flesh, (as the Jews commonly did,) shall be necessitated to confine themselves to butter and honey; for there shall be none flesh for them, and the country shall be so depopulated, that there shall be butter and honey enough for the few that are left in it.

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

5. The instruments of husbandry shall be turned into instruments of war, v. 24. The whole land being become briars and thorns, the grounds that used to be fruitful, which men used to gather in the fruits of, they shall now come to with arrows and bows, either to hunt for wild beasts in the thickets, or to defend themselves from the robbers that lurk in the bushes seeking for prey, or to kill the serpents and venomous beasts that are hid there. This bespeaks a very sad change of the face of that pleasant land. But what melancholy change is there wherein we will not make with a people used to be of use, and to do good service, even in the hedges, for the defence of the enclosed grounds, they shall be plucked up, and all laid in common. There shall be briars and thorns in abundance, there where they should not be, but none where there should be, v. 25. The hils that shall be digged with the mattock, and without with the sack and pruning-hook used to be kept off with the fear of briars and thorns, shall now be thrown open; the hedges broken down for the boa out of the wood to waste it, Ps. lxxx. 12, 13. It shall be left at large for oxen to run in, and lesser cattle.

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

ever so pleasant; if they lie ever so little neglected and uncultivated, or if they be abused by a wasteful, pernicious, and bloody war, they will soon become frightful deserts.

Heaven is a paradise not subject to such changes.

CHAP. VIII.

This chapter, and the four next that follow it, (to ch. 13.) are all one continued discourse or sermon; the scope of which is, to show the great destruction that should now shortly be brought upon the kingdom of Israel, and the great disturbance that should be given to the kingdom of Judah by the king of Assyria, and that both were for their sires; but rich provision is made of comfort for those that fear God, in those dark times, referring especially to the days of the Messiah. In this chapter we have, I. A prophecy of the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, and of the dominions of Syria and Israel by the king of Assyria, v. 1-8. II. Of the desolations that should be made by that proud, victorious prince, in the land of Israel and Judah, v. 8-13. III. Great encouragement given to the people of God in the midst of those destructions; they are assured, 1. That the enemies shall not gain their point against them, v. 9, 10. 2. That if they keep up the fear of God, and kept down the fear of man, they should find God their Refuge, (v. 11, 14.) and, while others stumbled, and fell into despair, they should be enabled to wait on God, and should see themselves reserved for better times, v. 12. 3. If they serve God, he gives necessary warning to all, at their peril, not to consult with familiar spirits, for they would thereby throw themselves into despair, but to keep close to the word of God, v. 19, 20. And these counsels, and these comforts, will still be of use to us in time of trouble.

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

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

1. Orders given to the prophet to write this prophecy, and publish it to be seen and read of all men, and to leave it upon record, that when the time came to pass, they might know that God had put it him: for that was one end of the prophecy, John xiv. 29. He must take a great roll, which would
That which the Assyrians made upon that country so long before; he faithfully witnesses, See what full satisfaction the prophets took care to give to all persons concerned, of the sincerity of their intentions, that we might know with a full assurance the certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed, and that we have not followed cunningly-devised fables.

The making of the title of his book the name of his child, that it might be the more taken notice of, and his child being called prophetically, was a sure indication he was a true prophet. He made his wife (because the wife of a prophet) is called the highthee; she conceived and bare a son, another son, who must carry a sermon in his name, as the former had done, (ch. vi. 3.) but with this difference, that spake mercy, Shear-jashubah—The remnant shall return; but that being slighted, this speaks judgment, Maher-shalal-hash-baz—In making speed to the spoil he shall hasten, or be hastened, to the prey. The prophecy is dubiously, even in this one name, for the thing was certain; I will hasten my word, Jer. i. 12. Every time the child was called by his name, or any part of it, it would serve as a memorandum of the judgments approaching. Note, It is good for us often to put ourselves in mind of the changes and troubles we are in, this it is in our time, and which perhaps are not so near the door. When we look with pleasure on our children, it should be with the allay of this thought, We know not what they are yet reserved for.

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

1. That Syria and Israel, who were now in captivity against Judah, should in very little time become an easy prey to the king of Assyria, and his victorious army; (v. 4.) before the child, now newly born and named, should have knowledge to cry, My father, and My mother, which are usually some of the first things that children know, and some of the first words that children speak, (v. 4.) in about a year or two, the riches of Damascus, and the spoil of Samaria, those cities that are now so secure themselves, and so formidable to their neighbours, shall be taken away before the king of Assyria, who shall plunder both city and country, and send the best effects of both into his own hand, to enrich that, and as trophies of his victory. Note, The spoil that shall be taken, shall be published, so as to be some marks of his power. (ch. xxxiii. 1.) for the Lord is righteous, and those that are troublesome shall be troubled.

2. That for so much as there were many in Judah, that were secretly in the interests of Syria and Israel, and should be disaffected to the house of David, God would chastise them also by the king of Assyria, who should create a great deal of vexation to Judah, (v. 7.) and was for a time a very sore scourge to them. Observe, (1.) What was the sin of the discontented party in Judah; (v. 6.) This people, whom the prophet here speaks to, refuse the waters of Shiloah that go softly, desire their own country and the government of it, and love to run it down, because it does not make so great a figure, and so great a noise in the world, as some other kings and kingdoms do. They refuse the comforts with which God’s prophets offer them from the word of God, speaking to them in a still small voice, and make nothing of them; but they rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah’s son, who were the enemies of their country, and were now actually invading it; they cried them up as brave men, magnified their policies and strength, applauded their conduct, were all-pleasing with their designs and resolved to desert and go over to them. Such vipers does many a state foster in its bosom, that eat its bread, and yet adhere to its enemies, and are ready to quit its interests, if they but seem to trot.

(2.) The judgment which God would bring upon them for this sin. The same king of Assyria, that ed ed Levnahv and Syria waste, should bring the scourge and terror to those of their party in Judah, v. 8. Because they refuse the waters of Shiloah, and will not accommodate themselves to the government God has set over them, but are uneasy under it, therefore the Lord brings upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, the river Euphrates; they slighted the land of Judah, because it had no strength to bear against it, and Jerusalem was a very considerable one. (Well,) says God, if you be such admirers of Euphrates, you shall have enough of it; the king of Assyria, whose country lies upon that river, shall come with his glory, with his great army, which you cry up as his glory, despising your own king, because he cannot bring such an army as that into the field; God shall bring that army upon you. If we value men, when we overvalue them, for their worldly wealth and power, it is just with God to make them by that a scourge to us. It is used as an argument against magnifying rich men, that rich men oppress us, Jam. ii. 3, 6. Let us be best pleased with the waters of Shiloah, that go softly, for rapid streams are dangerous. It is threatened that the Assyrian army should break in upon them like a deluge, or inundation of waters, bearing down all before it, should come up over all his channels, and overflow all his banks; it would be to no purpose to oppose or withstand them; Semacherib and his army should pass through Judah, and meet with so little resistance, that it should look more like a march through the country, than a descent upon it. He shall make his way between two crooked places, and shall advance so far as to lay siege to Jerusalem, the head of the kingdom, and nothing but that shall be kept out of his hands; for that was the holy city. Note, in the greatest deluge of trouble, God can, and will, keep the head of his people above water,
and so preserve their comforts and spiritual lives; that the waters that come into their souls, may reach to the neck, (Ps. lxxx. 1.) but there shall be their proud waves be stayed. And here is another comfortable intimating, that though the stretching out of the wings of the Assyrian, that bird of prey, though the right and left wing of his army, should fill the breadth of the land of Judah, yet still it was Immanuel's land. It is the land, O Immanuel; it was to be his land, and not merely his own. It is the land of peace, life, and peace, and work, and peace. He was Zion's King, and therefore had a peculiar interest in, and concern for, that land. Note. The land that Immanuel owns for his, as he does all those lands that own him, though they may be deluged, shall not be destroyed: for when the enemy shall come in like a flood, Immanuel shall secure his own, and shall lift up a standard against him, ch. lix. 19.

9. Associate yourselves, 0 ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. 10. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us. 11. For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me, that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, 12. Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy: neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. 13. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. 14. And he shall be for a sanctuary: but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15. And many among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

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

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

2. We do not but you will now make your utmost efforts against Judah and Jerusalem; you associate yourselves in a strict alliance, you gird yourselves, and again you gird yourselves, you prepare for action, you address yourselves to it with resolution, you gird on your swords, you gird up your loins, you animiate and encourage yourselves and one another with all the considerations you can think of, you take counsel together, call councils of war, and are at work, about the proper method for making yourselves masters of the land of Judah, you speak the word, you come to resolutions concerning it, and are not always deliberating, you determine what to do, and are very confident of the success of it, that the matter will be accomplished with a word's speaking." Note. It is with a great deal of policy, resolution, and assurance, that the church's enemies carry on their designs against it;}
cast on for. Do not join with those that, for the securing of themselves, are for making a league with the Assyrians, through unbelief, and distrust of God and their cause. Do not come into any such confederacy." Note, It concerns us, in time of trouble, to watch against all such fears as put us upon taking any indirect courses for our own security. They are the usual and effectual way in which men frighten themselves, and are led to do amiss. Do not amuse yourselves with the apprehension of a confederacy, upon every thing that stirs, nor, when any little thing is amiss, cry out presently. There is a plot, a plot. When they talk what dismal news there is, Syria is joined with Ephraim, what will become of us? Must we fight, or must we flee, or must we yield? Their fear is to put up their fear for it; these are the signs of heaven, as the heathen are, Jer. x. 2. Be not afraid of evil things on earth, but let your hearts be fixed. Fear not that which they fear, nor be afraid as they are. Be not put into such a fright as causes trembling and shaking; so the word signifies. Note, When the church's enemies have sinful confederacies on foot, the church's friends should watch against the sinful fears of those confederacies. 

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

3. He assures them of a holy security and security of mind, in so doing; (v. 14.) He shall be for a Sanctuary; make him your Fear, and you shall find him your Hope, your Help, your Defence, and your mighty Deliverer. He will sanctify and preserve you. He will be for a Sanctuary; [1.] To make you holy; He will be your Sanctification; so some read it. If we sanctify God by our praises, he will sanctify us by his grace. [2.] To make you easy; He will be your Support and Stay to them that trusted in him. Instead of profiting by the word of God, they should be offended at it; and the providences of God, instead of leading them to him, would drive them from him. What was a savour of life unto life to others, would be a savour of death unto death to them. So that many among them shall stumble and fall; they shall fall both into sin and into ruin, they shall fall by the sword, shall be taken prisoners, and go into captivity. Note, If the things of God be an offence for us, they will be an unfolding of his wisdom, grace, and power, to those that believe in him. Some apply this to the unbelief of those who rejected Christ, and to whom he became a Stone of stumbling, for the apostle quotes this scripture with application to all those who persisted in their unbelief of the gospel of Christ; (1 Pet. ii. 8.) to them he is a rock of offence, because, being disobedient to the word, they stumble at it. 

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

In these verses, we have, 

1. The unspeakable privilege which the people of God enjoy in honouring the oracles of God consigned over to them, and being intrusted with the sacred writings; that they may sanctify the Lord of hosts, may make him their Fear, and find him their Sanctuary; Bind up the testimony, v. 16. Note, It is a great instance of God's care of his church and love of it, that he has lodged in it the valuable treasure of divine revelation. 1. It is a testimony and a law; not only this prophecy is so, which must therefore be preserved safe for the comfort of God's people in the approaching times of trouble and distress, but the whole word of God is so; God has attested it, and he has enjoined it. As a testimony, it directs our faith; as a law, it directs our practice; and we ought both to subscribe to the truths of it, and to submit to the precepts of it. 2. This testimony and this law are bound up and sealed, for we must not open it, nor add to them, nor diminish from them; they are a letter from God to man, folded up and sealed; a proclamation under the broad seal. The binding up and sealing of the Old Testament signified, that the full explication of many of the prophecies of it was reserved for the New Testament times; (Dan. xii. 4.) Seal the book till the time of the end; but what was then bound up and sealed, is now open and unsealed, and revealed unto babes, Matt. xi. 25. Yet with reference to the other world, and the future state, still the testimony is bound up and sealed, for we know but in part, and prophecy but
The good use which we ought to make of this assurance. This part of the chapter is.

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

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

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

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

(1.) He supposes they would be tempted, in the day of their distress, to consult them that had fathers or teachers in other parts of the land, that they might choose some superior advice, and desired to be informed by him concerning things to come, that they might take their measures accordingly. Thus Saul, when he was in straits, made his application to the witch of Endor, (1 Sam. xxvii. 7, 15.) and Ahaziah to the God of Ekron, 2 Kings i. 2. These conjurors had fantastic gestures and tones; they peeped and muttered, and made a mighty show, and the people mused at the sorcerer, and seemed to be pleased with a spectacle, but to an unobservant eye it was all phantasy, but perplexed at; or both the words here used may refer to their voice or manner of speaking; they delivered what they had to say with a low, hollow, broken sound, scarcely articulate; and sometimes in a pung or mournful tone, like a crane, or a swallow, or a dove, ch. xxxviii. 14. They spake not with that boldness and plainness which the prophets of the oracles spake; but they spake not with the sound of people rather than to instruct them; yet there were those who were so wretchedly as to seek to them, and to court others to do so, even the prophet's hearers, who knew better things, where therefore the prophet warns not to say Aconference with such. There were express laws against this wickedness, (Lev. xix. 31—xxxv. 27.) and yet it was found in Israel, is found even in Christian nations; but let all that have any sense of religion show it, by startling at the thought of it; Get thee behind me, Satan. Dread the use of spells and charms, and consulting those that by hidden arts pretend to tell fortunes, cure diseases, or discover things lost; for this is a heinous crime, and, in effect, denies the God that is above.

(2.) He furnishes them with an answer to this temptation, puts words into their mouths; "If any goabout to ensnare you, give them this reply: Should not a people seek to their God? What! for the living to the dead!" (1) 'Tell them it is a principle of religion, that a people ought to seek unto their God; now Jehovah is our God, and therefore to him we ought to seek, and to consult with him. (2) Some texts read not with them that have familiar spirits. All people will thus walk in the name of their God, Mic. iv. 5. They that made the hosts of heaven's gods, sought unto them, Jer. viii. 2. Should not a people under guilt, and in trouble, seek to their God for pardon and peace? Should not a people in doubt, in want, and in danger, seek to their God for direction, supply, and protection? Since the Lord our God, and we as his people, it is certainly our duty to seek him." [2.] "Tell them it is an instance of the greatest folly in the world, to seek for living men to dead idols." What can be more absurd than to seek to lifeless images for life and living comforts, or to expect that our friends that are dead, when we defile them and pray to them, should do that for us which our living friends will not do? The wisdom shown here is, that if there is there with them, any device or working, Eccl. iv. 5, 10. It is folly therefore for the living to make their court to them, with any expectation of relief from them. Necromancers consulted the dead, as the witch of Endor, and so proclaimed their own folly; we must live by the living, and not by the dead; what life or light can we look for from them when we have no life nor light? (3.) He directs them to consult with the oracles of God; if the prophets that were among them did not speak directly to every case, yet they had the
written word, and to that they must have recourse. Note, Those will never be drawn to consult wizards, that know how to make a good use of their Bibles. Would we know how we may seek to our God, and come to the knowledge of his mind? To the law and the testimony. Thou shalt know that this is good, and what the Lord requires of you. Make God's statutes your counsellors, and you will be counselled right.

Observe, [1.] What use we must make of the law and the testimony; we must speak according to that word; we must make this our standard, conform to it, take advice from it, make our appearance to it, and in every thing be overruled and dictated by its revealed word, (1 Tim. vi. 3.) and speak of the things of God in the words which the Holy Ghost teaches. It is not enough to say nothing against it, but we must speak according to it. [2.] Why we must make use of this law and testimony; because we shall be convicted of the greatest folly imaginable if we do not. They that concur not with the word of God, prove there is no light, no morning-light, (so the word is,) in them; they have no right sense of things; they do not understand themselves, nor the difference between good and evil, truth and falsehood. Note, Those that reject divine revelation, have not so much as human understanding; nor do they rightly admit the oracles of reason, who will not admit the oracles of God. Someone read it as a threatening; but they speak not according to this word, there shall be no light to them, no good, no comfort, or relief; but they shall be driven to darkness and despair; as it follows here, (v. 21, 22.) What light had Saul when he consulted the witch? 1 Sam. xxviii. 18, 20. Or what light can they expect, that turn away from the Father's light? (v. 23.) 4. He needs the doom of those that seek to familiar spirits, and regard not God's law and testimony; there shall not only be no light to them, no comfort or prosperity, but they may expect all horror and misery, v. 21, 22. [1.] The trouble they feared shall come upon them; they shall pass through the land, or pass to and fro in the land, unsettled, and driven from place to place by the threatenings of an abounding enemy; they shall be hardly bested whither to go for the necessary supports of life; either because the country would be so impoverished, that there would be nothing to be had, or at least themselves and their friends so impoverished, that there would be nothing to be had for them; so that they who used to be fed to the full shall be hungered. Note, Those that go away from God, go out of the way of all good. [2.] They shall be very unequal to themselves, by their discontent and impatience under their trouble. A good man may be in want, but then he quiets himself, and strives to make himself easy; but these people, when they shall be hungry, shall fret themselves, and when they have nothing to feed on, their vexation shall prey upon their own spirits; for this comes from its own breaking. [3.] They shall be very provoking to all about them, say, to all above them; when they find all their measures broken, and themselves at their wit's end, they will forget all the rules of duty and decency, and will treasonably curse their king, and blasphemously curse their God; and this more than in their thought, and in their bed-chamber. Ezech. xix. 11. They cured their king, who were managing the public affairs no better, as if the fault were his, when the best and wisest kings cannot secure success; but when they have broken the bands of their allegiance, no marvel if those of their religion do not hold them long; they next curse their God, curse him, and die; they quarrel with his providence, and reproach that, as if he had done them wrong; The foolishness of men perverts his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord, Prov. xix. 3. See what need we have to keep our mouth as with a bridle, when our heart is not within us; for the language of treachery is commonly very opposite to what it is in their own minds. 5. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. 6. For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder:
and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

The first words of this chapter plainly refer to the close of the foregoing chapter, where everything looked black and melancholy: Behold, trouble, and darkness, and wherewith to comfort them, but be not so much dismayed as that to the upright there shall arise light in the darkness, (Ps. cxiii. 4.) and at evening-time it shall be light, Zech. xiv. 7. Nevertheless, it shall not be so much dismayed (either not such for kind, or not such for degree,) as sometimes there has been. Note, In the worst of times, God's people have a nevertheless to comfort themselves with, something to ally and balance their troubles; they are percursorly, while they are forsaking others, (2 Cor. vi. 11.) yet always rejoicing, 2 Cor. vi. 10. And it is a matter of comfort to us, when things are at the darkest, that he who forms the light, and creates the darkness, (ch. xlv. 7.) has appointed both their bounds, and set the over against the other, Gen. i. 4. He can say, “Hitherto the dimness shall go, so long as it shall last, and no further, no longer.” There we are here promised, that all shall be brought eventually to the light, and brightness, and joy, at the grace of the gospel, which the saints then were to comfort themselves with the hopes of, in every cloudy and dark day, as we now are to comfort ourselves, in time of trouble, with the hopes of Christ's second coming, though that he now, as his first coming then, was a thing at a great distance. The more likewise which God has in store for his church, in the latter days, may be a support to those that are mourning with her for her present calamities. We have here the promise,

I. Of a glorious light, which shall so qualify, and by degrees dispel, the dimness, that it shall not be, as it sometimes has been not such as was in her perfection; there shall not be such dark times as was before; and therefore there shall be no such darkness as that which was in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, that lay remote, and most exposed to the inroads of the neighbouring enemies; and, afterward, he more grievously afflicted the land by the way of the sea, and beyond Jordan, (v. 1.) referring, probably, to those days when God began to cut Israel short, and to unite them in all their coasts, 2 Kings xiv. 32. Note, In times what lesser judgments will do with a people, before he brings greater. But, 2. If a light affliction do not do its work with us, to humble and reform us, we must expect to be afflicted more grievously; for when God judges he will overcome.

Well, those were dark times with the land of Zebulon and Naphtali, and there was dimness of anguish in Galilee of the Gentiles, both in respect of ignorance, (they did not speak according to the law and testimony, and then there was no light in them, ch. viii. 20.) and in respect of trouble and the desperate posture of their outward affairs; we have both together, 2 Chron. xxv. 3, 5. Israel has been without the true God and a teaching priest, and in those times there was no peace: but the dimness that seemed to prevail to such a degree; For, (v. 2.) The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. (1.) At this time, when the prophet lived, there were many prophets in Judah and Israel, whose prophecies were a great light both for direction and comfort to the people of God, who adhered to the law and the testimony, beside the written word, they had prophecy; there were those that had showed them how to go, (Ps. lxiv. 9.) which was a great satisfaction to them, when, in respect of their outward troubles, they sat in darkness, and dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, (2.) This was to have its full accomplishment when Jesus began to appear as a Prophet, and to preach the glad tidings of the gospel in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, and in Galilee of the Gentiles. And the Old Testament prophets, as they were witnesses to him, so they were types of him. When he came, and dwelt in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali, then this prophecy is said to be fulfilled, Matt. iv. 13—16. Note, [1.] Those who most desirously wait for the light of God, and know not what they do, or whether they dwell in the land of the shadow of death, in thick darkness, and in the utmost danger. [2.] When the gospel comes to any place, to any soul, light comes, a great light, a shining light, which will shine more and more. It should be welcome to us, as light is to them that sit in darkness, and we could readily entertain it, both because it is of such sovereign power to triumph over their own evidence with it. Truly this light is sweet.

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

III. Of a glorious liberty and enlargement; (v. 4, 5.) “They shall rejoice before thee, and with good reason, for thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and made him easy, for he shall no longer
be in servitude, and then hast broken the staff of his shoulder, and the rod of his oppressor, that red of the wicked which rested long on the lot of the righteous;" as the Midianites' yoke was broken from off the neck of Israel by the agency of Gideon. If God makes for his servant a path to eternal life, and at last make him what he is, and lead him, as it were, to himself; (Ps. lxxxiii. 9.) "Do unto them as to the Midianites. What temporal deliverance this refers to, is not clear, probably, the preventing of Sennacherib from making himself master of Jerusalem, which was done, as in the day of Midian, by the immediate hand of God; and whereas other battles were usually won with a great deal of ease, and by the ordinary way; this shall be by a miracle only, and without noise; Under his glory God shall kindle a burning; (ch. xvi.) a fire not bound shall consume him, Job xx. 26. But doubtless it locks further, to the blessed fruits and effects of that great light which should visit them sat in darkness; it would bring liberty along with it, deliverance to the captives, Luke iv. 18. 1. The design of the gospel, and the grace of it, is the breaking of the yoke of sin and Satan, to remove the burden of guilt and corruption, and to free us from the rod of those oppressors, that we might be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Christ brake the yoke of the ceremonial law, (Acts xv. 10. Gal. v. 1.) and delivered us out of the hands of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear, (Luke i. 74, 75.) 2. This is done by the spirit working like fire, (Matt. iii. 11.) not as the battle of the warrior is fought, with confused noise; no, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but it is done with the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, ch. iv. 4. It is done as in the day of Midian, by a work of God upon the hearts of men. Christ is our Gideon; it is his sword that doth work here.

But who, where is he that shall undertake and accomplish these great things for the church? He tells us, (v. 6, 7.) they shall be done by the Messiah, Immanuel, that son of a virgin, whose birth he had foretold, (ch. vii. 14.) and now speaks of, in the prophetic style, as a thing already done: the Child is born; not only because it was as certain, and he was as certain of it, as if God had already brought it into existence; but because the church, before his incarnation, reaped great benefit and advantage by his undertaking in the virtue of that first promise concerning the Seed of the woman, Gen. iii. 15. As he was the Lamb slain, so he was the Child born, from the foundation of the world, Rev. xii. All the great things that God did for the Old Testament church, were done by him as the eternal Word, and for his sake as the Mediator. He was the Anointed, to whom God had respect, (Ps. lxxxiv. 9.) and it was for the Lord's sake, for the Lord Christ's sake, that God caused his face to shine upon his sanctuary, Dan. ix. 17. Therefore the Jewish nation, and particularly the house of David, were preserved many a time from imminent ruin, because that blessing was in the covenant of promise given to his seed, and that the church of Israel built him, and for his sake was given to the church of God then, that it should be preserved, and be the special care of Divine Providence, than this, that God had so great a mercy in reserve for it? The Chaldee Paraphrase understands it of the Man that shall endure for ever, even Christ. And it is an illustrious prophecy of him and of his kingdom, which doubtless they that waited for the exaltation of Israel built much upon, often turned to, and read with pleasure. (1.) See him in his humiliation; the same that is the mighty God, is a Child born; the Ancient of Days becomes the Infant of a span long; the everlasting Father is a Son given. Such was his condition in taking our nature upon him; thus did he humble and empty himself, to excel and fill us. He is born into our world: the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. He is given, freely given, to be all that to us, which our case, in our fallen state, calls for; God so loved the world, that he gave his own Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He is born into the heavens and bestowed on the angels that sinned; it is spoken with an air of triumph, and the angel seems to refer to these words in the notice he gives to the shepherds of the Messiah's being come; (Luke ii. 11.) unto you is born, this day, a Saviour. Note, Christ's being born and given to us, is the great foundation of our hopes, and fountain of our joys, in times of greatest grief and fear.

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

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

First, He is Wonderful, Counsellor. Justly he is called Wonderful, for he is both God and man. His love is changed not; he is the same, that is, in his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, he was wonderful. A constant series of wonders attended him, and, without controversy, great was the mystery of godliness concerning him. He is the Counsellor, for he was intimately acquainted with the counsels of God from eternity, and he gives counsel to the children of men, in which he consults our welfare. It is by him that God has built, in his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, a wonderful Counselor, a wonder or miracle of a counsellor; in this, as in other things, he has the pre-eminence; none teaches like him.

Secondly, He is the mighty God; God, the mighty One. As he has wisdom, so he has strength, to go with wisdom. This is him that God has given to us, in his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, the might of God, the mighty One. Some join these together; He is the Wonderful Counsellor, a wonder or miracle of a counsellor; in this, as in other things, he has the pre-eminence; none teaches like him.

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

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

[2.] See the dominion he is advanced to, and the throne he has, above every throne; (v. 6.) The government shall be upon his shoulder; his title: he shall not only wear the badge of it upon his
shoulder, (the key of the house of David, ch. xxii. 32.) out he shall go forth of his kingdom. The Father shall divulge it upon him, so that he shall have an incontestable right to govern; and he shall undertake it, so that no doubt can be made of his governing well, for he shall set his shoulder to it, and will never complain, as Moses did, of his being overcharged; I am not able to bear all this people, Numb. xi. 11, 14.

Glorious things are here spoken of Christ's government.

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

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

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

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

Fifthly, That it shall be an everlasting kingdom: here shall be no end of the increase of his government, it shall be still growing; no end of the increase of the peace of it, for the happiness of the subjects of this kingdom shall last to eternity, and perhaps shall be progressive in infinitum—for ever.

He shall reign from henceforth even for ever; not only this shall be when he has completed the work of his kingdom, but even then when the kingdom shall be delivered up to God, even the Father, the glory both of the Redeemer and the redeemed shall continue eternally.

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

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

11. Therefore the Lord shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and join his enemies together; 12. The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. 13. For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts. 14. Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day.

15. The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. 16. For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed. 17. Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows: for every one is a hypocrite and an evil-doer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

18. For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest; and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke. 19. Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother. 20. And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm:

21. Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: and they together shall be against Judah. For this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

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

I. The preface to this prediction; (7, 8.) The Lord sent a word into Jacob; sent it by his servants the prophets; he warns before he wounds; he sent notice what he would do, that they might meet him in the way of his judgments, but they would not take the hint, took no care to turn away his wrath, and so it lighted upon Israel; for no word of God shall fall to the ground. It fell upon them as a storm of rain and hail from on high, which they could not avoid. “It has lighted upon them; it is as sure to come as if it were come already; and all the people shall know by feeling it, what they would not know by hearing of it.” Those that are willingly ignorant of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against sin and sinners, shall be made to know it.

II. The sins charged upon the people of Israel,
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which provoked God to bring these judgments upon them.

1. Their insolent defiance of the justice of God, thinking themselves a match for him; They say, in the pride and stoutness of their heart, "Let God himself do his worst, we will hold our own, and make our part good with him; if he ruin our houses, we will repair them, and make them stronger and finer than they were before."

2. Their incorrigibility under all the rebukes of providence hitherto; (v. 15.) The people that is not diligent to return unto God, will be brought upon to reform their lives, to forsake their sins, and to return to their duty; neither do they seek the Lord of hosts; either they are atheists, and have no religion, or idolaters, and seek to those gods that are the creatures of their own fancy, and the works of their own hands. Note, That which God designs, in uniting us, is, to turn us to himself, and to set us a subject for his glory.

3. Their general corruption of manners and abounding profaneness. (1.) Those that should have reformed them, helped to debauch them; (v. 18.) The leaders of this people mislead them, and cause them to err, by conniving at their wickedness, and countenancing wicked people, and by setting them bad examples; and then no wonder if they that are led of them be deceived, and so destroyed; but it is ill with a people when their physicians are their worst disease. They that bless this people, or call them blessed, (so the margin reads it,) that flatter them, and soothe them up in their wickedness, and cry Peace, peace, to them, they cause them to err, and they are swallowed up ere they are aware. We have reason to be afraid of those that speak well of us when we do ill; see Prov. xxiv. 24.—xxxix. 5. (2.) Wickedness was universal, and all were infected with it; (v. 17.) Every one is a hypocrite and evil-doer. If there be any that are good, they do not dare, appear; for every mouth speaks folly and villany; every one is profane toward God, (so the word properly signifies,) and an evil-doer toward man; these two commonly go together; they that fear not God, regard not man; and then every mouth speaks folly, falsehood, and reproach, both against God and man; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

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

1. In general, hereby they exposed themselves to the wrath of God, which should both devour as fire, and darken as smoke. (1.) It should devour as fire; (v. 18.) Wickedness shall burn as the fire; the displeasure of God, incurred by sin, shall consume the slayers, who have made themselves as briars and thorns, and as the thorns of the forest, combustible matter, which the wrath of the Lord of hosts, the mighty God, will go through, and burn together. (2.) It should darken as smoke; the briars and thorns, when the fire consumes them, shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke, so that the whole land shall be darkened by it; they shall be in trouble, and see no way out; (v. 19.) The people shall be as the fuel of the fire. God's wrath fastens upon none but those that make themselves fuel for it, and then they mount up as the smoke of sacrifices, being made victims to divine justice.

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

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

4. That the desolation should be as general as the corruption had been, and none should escape it, v. 17. (1.) Not those that were the objects of complacency; none shall be spared for love: The Lord shall have no joy in their young men, that were in the flower of their youth; nor will he say, Deal gently with the young men for my sake; no, "Let them fall with the rest, and with them let the seed of the next generation perish." (2.) Not those that were the objects of compassion; none shall be spared for pity; He shall not have mercy on the fatherless and widows, though he is, in a particular manner, their Patron and Protector; they had corrupted their way like all the rest; and if the poverty and helplessness of their state was not an argument with them to keep them from sin, they could not expect it should be an argument with God to protect them from judgments.
5. That they should pull one another to pieces, and every one should help forward the common ruin, and they should be cannibals to themselves and one another; No man shall spare his brother, if he come in the way of his ambition or covetousness, or if he have any colour to be revenged on him; and how can they expect God should spare them, when they show no compassion one to another? Men's passions possess them again, and they will have God to be angry with them all, and are an evidence that he is so. Civil wars soon bring a kingdom to desolation; such there were in Israel, when, for the transgression of the land, many were the princes thereof, Prov. xxviii. 2. In these intestine broils, men snatched on the right hand and yet were hungry still, and did eat the flesh of their own arm, preyed upon themselves for hunger, or upon their nearest relations that were as their own flesh, v. 20. This bespeaks, (1.) Great famine and scarcity; when men had pulled all they could to them, it was so little, that they were still hungry, at least God did not bless it to them; so that they eat and have not enough, Hagai i. 6. (2.) Great rapine and plunder; Juscque datum sceleris—Iniquity is established, and the house of the wicked is built upon the hedge of protection to men's estates, shall be pluck'd up, and every man shall think all that his own which he can lay his hands on; Visirur ex rapto; non hospes ab hospite tutus—They live on the spoil, and the rites of hospitality are all violated. And yet when men thus catch at that which is none of their own, they are not satisfied. Covetous desires are insatiable. This is introduced to show that which is ill got, that it will never do well.

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

6. That though they should be followed with all those judgments, yet God would not let fall his controversy with them. It is the heavy burthen of this song; (v. 12, 17, 21.) For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still; (1.) They did not repent and reform, they do not humble themselves and pray; none stand in the gap, none answer God's calls, nor comply with the designs of his providences, but they are hardened and secure. (2.) His anger therefore continues to burn against them, and his hand is stretched out still. The reason why the judgments of God are prolonged, is, because the nation is not brought to repentance by the judgments of the people turn not to him that enlighten them, and therefore he continues to smite them; for when God judges, he will overcome; and the proudest, stoutest sinner shall either bend or break.

CHAP. X.

The prophet, in this chapter, is dealing, 1. With the proud oppressors of his people at home, that abused their power, to pervert justice, whom he would reckon with for their tyranny, v. 1-4. 2. With a threatening invader of his people from abroad, Schachriub king of Assyria; concerning whom, observe, 1. The commission given him to invade Judah, v. 5, 6. 2. His pride and insolence in the execution of that commission, v. 7, 11, 13, 14. 3. A rebuke given to his haughtiness, and a threatening of his fall, v. 8, 9, when he shall be brought to the place of which God raised him up, v. 12, 15, 19. 4. A promise of grace to the people of God, to enable them to bear up under the affliction, and to get good by it, v. 20, 23. 5. Great encouragement given to them not to fear the threatening storm, but to hope that, though for the present all the country was put into a great consternation by it, it would end well, in the destruction of this formidable enemy, v. 24, 25. And this is intended to give the minds of good people, in reference to all the threatening efforts of the wrath of the church's enemies, if God be for us, who can be against us? None do to us any harm.

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

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

Here is, 1. The indictment drawn up against these oppressors, v. 1, 2. They are charged, (1.) With making wicked laws and edicts: they decree unrighteous decrees, contrary to natural equity and divine law, and which, by reason of them, they did not make those under them write it, enroll it, and put it into the formality of a law. Wo to the superior powers that devise and decree these decrees! They are not too high to be under the divine check. And wo to the inferior officers that draw them up, and enter them upon record! They are not too mean to be within the divine cognizance; the writers that write the grievous decrees, principally kings and princes, shall fall under the same wo. Note, It is bad to do hurt, but it is worse to do it with design and deliberation, to do wrong to many, and to involve many in the guilt of doing wrong. (2.) With perverting justice in the execution of the laws that were made: no people had statutes and judgments so righteous as they had; and yet corrupt judges found ways to turn aside the right of the poor from under the name of justice, and their judgment was not according to righteousness coming at their right, and recovering what was their due, because they were needy and poor, and such as they could get nothing by, nor expect any bribes from. (3.) With enriching themselves by oppressing these that lay at their mercy, whom they ought to have protected: they make widows' houses and extort their prey, and they rob the fatherless of the little that is left them, because they have no friend to appear for them. Not to relieve them if
they had wanted, not to right them if they were wronged, had been crime enough in men that had wealth and power; but to rob them because on the side of the oppressors there was power, and the oppressed had no comforter, (Ezek. iv. 3.) is such a piece of barbarity, as one would think, none could ever be guilty of, that had either the nature of a man, or the name of an Israelite.

2. A challenge given them with all their pride and power to outface the judgments of God; (v. 3.) What will ye do? To whom shall ye flee for safety? You can triumph upon the widows and fatherless; but what will ye do when God riseth up? Job xxxi. 14. Great men, who trample over the poor, think they shall never be called to account for it, shall never hear of it again, or fare the worse for it; but shall not God visit for these things? Jer. v. 29. Will there not come a desolation upon those that have made others desolate? Perhaps it may come from far, and therefore may be long in coming; but it will come at last; repeieth are not pardons; and, coming from far, from a quarter whence it was least expected, it will be the greater surprise, and the more terrible. Now what will then become of these unrighteous judges? Now they see their help in the gate, Job xxxi. 21. But to whom will they then flee for help? Note. (1.) There is a day of visitation coming, a day of inquiry and discovery, a searching day, which will bring to light, to a true light, even in very places of darkness. (2.) That day of visitation will be a day of desolation to all wicked people, when all their comforts and hopes will be lost and gone, and buried in ruin, and themselves left desolate. (3.) Impenitent sinners will be utterly at a loss, and will not know what to do in the day of visitation and desolation. They cannot fly and hide themselves, cannot fight it out and defend themselves, nor can they use any stratagem in which to either shelter themselves from the present evil, (To whom shall ye flee for help?) or to secure to themselves better times hereafter; Where will ye leave your glory, to find it again when the storm is over? The wealth they had got was their glory, and they had no place of safety in which to deposit that, but they should certainly see it flee away. If our souls be but glory, as they ought to be, and we make them our chief care, we know where to leave them, and into whose hands to commit them, even those of a faithful Creator. (4.) It concerns us all seriously to consider what we shall do in the day of visitation, in a day of affliction, in the day of death and judgment, and to provide that we may do well. 3. Sentence passed upon them, by which they are doomed, some to imprisonment and captivity: They shall bow down among the prisoners, or under them; those that were most highly elevated in sin, shall be most heavily loaded, and most deeply sunk in trouble; others to death, they shall fall first, and so shall fall under the rest of the slain; they that had trampled upon the widows and fatherless, shall themselves be trodden down; (v. 4.) And it shall come to,” says God, without me: because you have deserted me, and driven me away from you. Nothing but utter ruin can be expected by those that live without God in the world; that cast him behind their back, and so cast themselves out of his protection.

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

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

6. I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mare of the streets. 7. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. 3. For he saith, Are not my princes altogether kings? 9. Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus? 10. As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; 11. Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols? 12. Wherefore it shall come to pass, that, when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. 13. For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man: 14. And my hand hath found, as a nest, the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped. 15. Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lifted it up, or as if the staff should lift itself up, as if it were no wood. 16. Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire. 17. And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day; 18. And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth. 19. And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them.

The destruction of the kingdom of Israel by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, was foretold in the foregoing chapter, and it had its accomplishment in the sixth year of Hezekiah, 2 Kings xviii. 10. It was total and final, head and tail were all cut off. Now the destruction of the kingdom of Judah by Sennacherib, king of Assyria, is foretold in this chapter; and this prediction was fulfilled in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, when that potent prince, encouraged by the successes of his predecessor against the ten tribes, came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them, and
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Hezekiah, the king of Judah, was greatly alarmed, but there was a good work of reformation lately begun among them: but it ended well, in the confusion of the Assyrians, and the great encouragement of Hezekiah and his people in their return to God. Now to the text.

I. How God, in his sovereignty, deputed the king of Assyria to be his servant, and made use of him as a mere tool to serve his own purposes with; (r. 3, 6.) "A Assyrian, know this, that thou art the rod of mine anger; and I will send thee to be a scourge to the people of my wrath." Observe here, 1. How bad the character of the Assyrian was. They were a very great and powerful nation; they are a hypocritical nation, that made a profession of religion, and, at this time particularly, of reformation, but were not truly religious, not truly reformed, not so good as they pretended to be, now that Hezekiah had brought goodness into fashion. When rulers are pious, and so religion is in reputation, it is common for nations to be hypocritical; they are a profane nation; so some read it. Hezekiah had made a great measure cured them of their idolatry, and now they run into profaneness; nay, hypocrisy is profaneness: none profane the name of God so much as those who are called by that name, and call upon it, and yet live in sin. Being a profane hypocritical nation, they are the people of God's wrath; they lie under his wrath, and are likely to be severely punished. His people to make use of the people of God's wrath: nothing is more offensive to God than dissimulation in religion. See what a change sin made: they that had been God's chosen and hallowed people, above all, were now become the people of his wrath, See Amos iii. 2. 2. How mean the character of the Assyrian is, though he appeared very great; he is but the rod of God's anger; an instrument God is pleased to make use of for the chastening of his people, that, being thus chastened of the Lord, they may not be condemned with the world. Note, The tyrants of the world are but tools of Providence. Men are God's hand, his sword sometimes, to kill and slay, Ps. xvii. 13, 14. At other times, they are his rod to correct. The staff in their hand, whereby with they smite his people, is his indignation; it is his wrath that puts the matter to blows and blood. His rod enables them to deal blows at pleasure among such as thought themselves a match for them. Sometimes God makes an idolatrous nation, that serves him not at all, a scourge to an hypocritical nation, that serves him not in sincerity and truth.

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

II. See how the king of Assyria, in his pride, magnified himself as his own master, and pretend- ed to be above all, and above all control; to act purely according to his own will, and for his own honour. God ordained him for judgment, even the mighty God established him for correction, (Hab. i. 12.) to be an instrument of bringing his people to repentance; howbeit, he means not so, nor does his heart think so, r. 7. He does not think that he is either God's servant, or Israel's friend; either that he can do no more than God will let him, or that he will do more than God will make to work for the good of his people. God designs to correct his people for, and so to cure them of, their hypocrisy, and bring them nearer to him; but was that Sennacherib's design? No, it was the furthest thing from his thoughts: he means not so. Note, 1. The wise God often makes even the sinful passions and projects of men subservient to his own great and holy ends. These instruments in his hand to do his work, it is very common for him to mean one thing, and they to mean another; may, for them to mean the quite contrary to what he intends. What Joseph's brethren designed for hurt, God overruled for good, Gen. i. 20. See Mic. iv. 11, 12. Men have their ends, and God has his, but we are sure the counsel of the Lord shall stand. But what is it the proud Assyrian aims at? The heart of kings is unsearchable, but God knew what was in his heart: he designs nothing but to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few, and to make himself master of them. (1.) He designs to gratify his own cruelty; nothing will serve but to destroy, and cut off. He hopes to regale himself with blood and slaughter; that of particular persons he does not spare; His purpose is to make them toodled by retail, he traffics in murder by wholesale; nations, and those not a few, must have but one neck, which he will have the pleasure of cutting off. (2.) He designs to gratify his own covenants and ambition, to set up for a universal monarch, and to gather unto him all nations, Hab. ii. 3. An insatiable desire of wealth and dominion, is that which carries him on in this undertaking.

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

[1.] He boasts what great things he has done to other nations. First, He has made his kings his courtiers; (r. 8.) "My princes are altogether kings; those that are now my princes, are such as have been kings." Or, he means that he had raised his throne to that degree, that his servants, and those that were in command under him, were as great, and lived in as much pomp, as the kings of other countries; by this he shows his pride how far above they could be brought down; for that maxim generally holds true that pride goes before destruction. It also intimates, that God takes notice, and keeps an account, of all men's proud and haughty words, with which they set heaven and earth at defiance. They that speak great swelling words of vanity, shall hear of them again.

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I saw how ignorant he was, and then we shall the less wonder that he was so proud. Secondly, He prefers the graven images of other countries before those of Jerusalem and Samaria, when he might have known that the worshippers of the God of Is-

is, and therefore Samaria without the image, and if any did, it must be by stealth, and therefore they could not be so rich and pompous as those of other nations. If he mean the ark and the mercy-seat, he speaks like himself, very foolishly, and as one that judged by the sight of the eye, and might therefore be easily deceived in matters of spirit-

ual concern. Those who make external pomp and splendor a mark of the true church, go by such a rule. Thirdly, Because he had conquered Samaria, he concludes Jerusalem would fall of course; "shall not I do so to Jerusalem? Can I not as easily, and may I not as justly?" But it did not follow; for Jerusalem adhered to her God, whereas Samaria had forsaken him.

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

1. He shows the vanity of his insolent and audacious boasting; (v. 15.) Shall the axe boast itself against him that hews with it? Or, Shall the saw magnify itself against him that draws it? So absurd are the boasts of this proud man.

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

2. He foretells his fall and ruin.

(1.) That when God hath done his work for him, he will then do his work upon him. For the effect of the people of God is to bend, and can do nothing but what it is directed by him that uses it. The psalmist prays that God would make the nations know that they were but men, (Ps. ix. 20.) the staff to know that it is but wood.

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order to the performing of some great good work upon them; and when that is done, then, and not till then, he will work deliverance for them. When God brings his people into trouble, it is to try them, (Dan. xi. 53.) to bring sin to their remembrance, and humble them for it, and to awaken them to a sense of their duty, to teach them to pray, and to love and help one another; and this must be the fruit of patience, that God's people be made humble and lowly:

When these points are, in some measure, gained by the affliction, it shall be removed in mercy, (Lev. xxvi. 41, 42.) otherwise not; for as the word, so the rod, shall accomplish that for which God sends it. [2] When God had wrought this work of grace for his people, he would work a work of wrath and vengeance upon their invader; I will punish the king of Assyria. His big words are here said to come from his stout heart, and they are the fruit of it, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; notice is taken too of the glory of his high looks, for a proud look is the indication of a proud spirit.

The enemies of the church are commonly very high and haughty; but, sooner or later, God will reckon for that. He glories in it as an incontestable proof of his sovereignty, and stands upon proud men, and abuses them, Job xi. 11, &c.

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

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

[2] How this destruction is represented. It shall be Fitz, as a consumption of the body, be a disease: The Lord shall send leanness among his fatness, or his fat ones. His numerous army, that was like a body covered with fatness, shall be diminished, and waste away, and become like a skeleton. Secondly, as a consumption of buildings, or trees and bushes, by fire; Under his glory, that very thing which he had taken away from them shall return upon them. The fire of a burning, of a fire, which shall lay his army in ruins, as suddenly as a raging fire lays a stately house in ashes. Some make it an allusion to the fire kindled under the sacrifices, for proud sinners fall as sacrifices to divine justice. Observe, 1. How this shall be kindled, v. 17. The same God that is a rejoicing Light to them that serve him faithfully, will be a consuming Fire to them that trifle with him, or rebel against him; the Light of Israel shall be Fire to the Assyrians, as the same pillar of cloud was a light to the Israelites, and a terror to the Egyptians, in the Red sea. What can oppose what can extinguish, such a fire? 2. What dissolution it shall make; It shall burn and devour its thorns and briers, its officers and soldiers, which are of little worth, and vexations to God's Israel, as thorns and briers, whose end is to be burned, and which are easily and quickly consumed by a devouring fire; (ch. xxxvii. 5.) Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? They will be so far from stopping the fire, that they will inflammation it; I would go through them and burn them together; they shall be devoured in one day, all cut off in an instant. When they cried not only Peace and safety, but Victory and triumph, then sudden destruction came; it came surprisingly, and was consumed in a moment. He looked upon the Assyrians, (v. 18.) the choice troops of his army, the veterans, the troops of the household, the bravest regiments he had, that he was most proud of, and depended most upon, that he values, as men do their timber-trees, the glory of their forest, or their fruit-trees, the glory of their Carmel; those shall be put as briers and thorns before the fire; they shall be consumed both soul and body, entirely consumed, not only a smoking heap, but a burning heap; and therefore we should fear him more than man, who can but kill the body; great armies before him are but as great woods, which he can fell or fire when he pleases.

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

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

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

1. The conversion of some, to whom this providence should be sanctified, and yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, though for the present it was not joyful, but grievous; these are but a remnant; (v. 22.) the remnant of Israel, (v. 20.) the remnant of Jacob, (v. 21.) but a very few in comparison with
the vast numbers of the people of Israel, which were as the sand of the sea. Note, Converting work is wrought but on a remnant, who are distinguished from the rest, and set apart for God. When we see how populous Israel is, how numerous the members of the visible church are, as the sand of the sea, and yet consider that of those a remnant only shall be saved, that's a strong word; and though here they be few, we shall surely strive to enter in at the strait gate, and fear lest we seem to come short. The remnant of Israel are said to be such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, such as escaped the corruptions of the house of Jacob, and kept their integrity in times of common apostacy; and that was a fair escape. And therefore they escape the desolations of that house, for they shall be preserved in safety, in times of common calamity; and that also will be a fair and narrow escape. Their lives shall be given them for a prey; (Jer. xlv. 5.) the righteous scarcely are saved.

Now, (1.) This remnant shall come off from all confidence in an arm of flesh, this providence shall cure them of that; they shall no more again stay upon him that smote them, shall never depend upon the Assyrians, as they have done for his escape, done for his escape, for his escape, for their other enemies, finding that they are themselves their worst enemies; Ictus piscator sahit—Sufferings teach caution. They have now learned, by dear-bought experience, the folly of leaning upon that staff as a stay to them, which may perhaps prove a staff to beat them; it is a part of the covenant of a returning people, (Hos. xiv. 3.) away with all confidence in us. Note, By our afflictions we may learn not to make creatures our confidence. (2.) They shall come home to God, to the mighty God, (one of the names given to the Messiah, ch. ix. 6.) to the Holy One of Israel. The remnant shall return; that was signified by the name of the prophet's son, Shear-jashub, ch. vii. 3.) even the remnant of Jacob: they shall return after the raining of the siege of Jerusalem, not only to the quiet possession of their houses and lands, but to God and to their duty; they shall repent and pray, and seek his face, and reform their lives. The remnant that escape, are a returning remnant; they shall return to God, and shall stay upon him. Note, Those only may with comfort stay upon God, that return to him; then may we have a humble confidence in God: He is the one in whom we may set our trust. They shall stay upon the Holy One of Israel, in truth, and not in pretence and profession only. This promise of the conversion and salvation of a remnant of Israel now, is applied by the apostle, (Rom. ix. 27.) to the remnant of the Jews, which, at the first preaching of the gospel, received and entertained it: and sufficiently proves, that it was no new thing for God to abandon to ruin a great multitude of the seed of Abraham, and yet preserve his promise to Abraham in full force and virtue; for so it was now. The number of the children of Israel was as the sand of the sea, (according to the promise, Gen. xxxii. 17.) and yet only a remnant shall be saved.

2. The consumption of others; The Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption; (v. 23.) this is not meant (as that v. 18.) of the consumption of the Assyrian army, but of the consumption of the estates and families of many of the Jews by the Assyrian army. This is taken notice of, to magnify the power and goodness of God in the escape of the distinguished remnant, and to let us know what shall become of those that will not return to God; they shall be wasted away by this consumption, this general destroying of the midst of the land. Observe, (1.) It is a consumption of God's own making; he is the author of it; the Lord God of hosts, whom none can resist, he shall make this consumption. (2.) It is decreed, it is not the product of a sudden resolve, but was before ordained; it is determined, not only that there shall be such a consumption, but it is cut out, (so the word is,) it is particularly appointed, how far it shall extend, and how long it shall continue, who shall be consumed by it, and who not. (3.) It is an overflowing consumption, in that shall overspread the land, and, like a mighty torrent or inundation, shall cover down all before it. (4.) Though it overflows, it is not at random, but in righteous judgment, which signifies both wisdom and equity. God will justly bring this consumption upon a provoking people, but he will wisely and graciously set bounds to it; Hitherto it shall come, and no further.

24. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian; he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt. 25. For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger, in their destruction. 26. And the Lord of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and as his rod was upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt. 27. And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing. 28. He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron; at Michmash he hath laid up his carriages: 29. They are gone over the passage: they have taken up their lodging at Geba; Ramah is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled. 30. Lift up thy voice, 0 daughter of Gallim; cause it to be heard unto Laish. 0 poor Anathoth. 31. Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. 32. As yet shall he remain at Nob that day: he shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem. 33. Behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, shall hop the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled. 34. And he shall cut down the thicket of the forests with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.

The prophet, in his preaching, distinguishes between the precious and the vile; for God, in his providence, even in the same providence, does set he speaks terror, in Sennacherib's invasion, to the hypocrites, who were the people of God's wrath, 8. But here he speaks comfort to the sincere, who were the people of God's love. The judgment was sent for the sake of the former, the deliverance was wrought for the sake of the latter. Here we have.

1. An exhortation to God's people, not to be frightened at this threatening calamity, nor to be put into any confusion or consternation, which is.

24. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, ch. xxxiii. 14. O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian. Note, It is against the mind and will of God, that his people, whatever happens
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shud give way to that fear which has a tremment and amazement. They that dwell in Zion, where God dwells, and where God grants him his own service, that are under the protection of the bulwarks that are round about Zion, (Ps. xlvii. 13.) need not be afraid of any enemy. Let their souls dwell at ease in God.

II. Considerations offered for the silencing of their fear.

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

2. The storm will soon blow over; (v. 25.) Yet a very little while, a little, little while, (so the word.) and the iniquity thereof shall cease, even nine months is the staff in their hand, (v. 3.) so that when these cease, they are disarmed, and disabled to do any further mischief. Note, God's anger against his people is but for a moment; (Ps. xxx. 5.) and when these cease, and is turned away from us, we need not fear the fury of any man, for it is important passion.

3. The evil that threatens them, shall himself be reconciled with God's anger against his people shall cease in the destruction of their enemies; when he turns away his wrath from Israel, he shall turn it against the Assyrian; and the rod with which he corrected his people, shall not only be laid aside, but thrown into the fire. He lift up his staff against Zion, but God shall stir up a scourge for him; (v. 26.) he is a terror of God's people, but God will be a Terror to him; the destroying angel shall be this scourge: which he can neither flee from, nor contend with. The prophet, for the encouragement of God's people, quotes precedents, and puts them in mind of what God had done formerly against the enemies of his church, that were very strong and formidable, but were brought to ruin. The destruction of the Assyrian shall be, (1.) According to the destruction of Midian, (Judges x. 11.) invisible power, but done suddenly, and it was a total rout. And as at the rock of Oreb, one of the princes of Midian, after the battle, was slain, so shall Sennacherib be in the temple of his god Nisroch, after the defeat of his forces, when he thinks the bitterness of death is past. Compare with this, Ps. lxxxiii. 11. Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb, and see how their people are broken, (2.) As his rod was upon the sea, the Red sea, as Moses's rod was upon that, to divide it, first for the escape of Israel, and then to close it again for the destruction of their pursuers, so shall his rod now be lifted up, after the manner of Egypt, for the deliverance of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Assyrian. Note, It is good to observe the difference between God's latter and former appearances for his people, and against his and their enemies. They shall be wholly delivered from the power of the Assyrian, and from the fear of it; (v. 27.) they shall not only be eased of the Assyrian army, which now quartered upon them, and which was a grievous yoke and burden to them, but they shall no more pay that tribute to your king of Assyria, which, before this invasion, he had exacted from them, (2 Kings xviii. 14.) shall be no longer in his service, nor lie at his mercy, as they have done; (v. 28.) they shall have been delivered from that inordinate veneration and idolatrous adoration. Some think it looks further, to the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon; and further yet, to the redemption of believers from the tyranny of sin and Satan. The yoke shall not only be taken away, but it shall be destroyed; the enemy shall no more recover his strength, to do the mischief he has done. And this, because of the destroying of the heavens and the earth by fire, and the captivity of the nations, (as the Prophet speaks in the preceding verses,) the anointing. (1.) For Hezekiah's sake, who was the anointed of the Lord, who had been an active reformation, and was dear to God. (2.) For David's sake; that is particularly given them as the reason why God would defend Jerusalem from Sennacherib, (ch. xxxvi. 33.) For my own sake, and for my servant David's sake. (3.) For his people Israel's sake, they were but a people among those that had received the institution of divine grace. (4.) For the sake of the Messiah, the Anointed of God, whom God had an eye to in all the deliverances of the Old Testament church, and hath still an eye to in all his favours he shows to his people; it is for his sake that the yoke is broken, and that we are made free indeed.

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

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

2. How cowardly the men of Judah were, the degenerate seed of that lion's whelp; they are afraid, they are fled upon the first alarm, and did not offer to make any head against the enemy; their apostacy from God had spirited them, so that one chases a thousand of them. Instead of a valiant shout, to animate one another, nothing was heard but lamentation, to discourage and weaken one another. And poor Anatheah, a priest's city, that should have been a pattern of courage, shrieeks louder than any; (v. 30.) with respect to those that gathered themselves together, it was not to fight, but to flee by consent, v. 31. This is designed either, (1.) To show how fast the news of the enemies progress flew through the kingdom; He is come to Jath, says not only the king, but the common people; and, (2.) To show what imminent danger Jerusalem was in, when its enemies made so many bold advances towards it, and its friends were not to be depended upon to make any offer of assistance.

Note, The more daring the church's enemies are, and the more dastardly those are that should appear for her, the more will God be exalted in his own strength, when notwithstanding this, he works deliverance for her.

3. How impotent his attempt upon Jerusalem. shall be; He shall remain at Nob, whence he left Micmash, and there he shall shake his hand against it; (v. 32.) he shall threaten it, and that shall
be all; it shall be safe, and shall set him at defiance; the daughter of Jerusalem, to be even with him, shall shake her head at him, ch. xxxvii. 22.

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

CHAP. XI.

It is a very good transition in prophecy, (whether it be so in the time of writing, or in the time of hearing,) from the prediction of the temporal deliverances of the church to that of the great salvation, which in the fulness of time shall be wrought out by Jesus Christ, of which the other verses are, and theirs to which all the prophets bare witness; and the ancient Jews understood them. For what else was it that raised so great an expectation of the Messiah at the time he came. Upon occasion of the prophecy of the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, here comes in a prophecy concerning Messiah the Prince: I. His rise out of the house of David, v. 1. His qualifications for his great undertaking, v. 2. 3. His justice and equity of his government, v. 3. 5. IV. His kingdom, v. 6. 8. The accession of the Gentiles to it, (v. 10.) and with them the remnant of the Jews, that should be united with them in the Messiah's kingdom, v. 11. 16. And of all this, God had given it to Jeremiah, and his name was among the prophets, to give the dark representation, in the excellent government of Hezekiah, the great peace which the nation should enjoy under him, after the ruin of Sennacherib's design, and the return of many of the ten tribes out of their dispersion to their brethren of the land of Judah, when they enjoyed that great tranquillity.

1. AND there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: 2. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord: 3. And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears. 4. But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. 5. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. 6. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. 7. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. 9. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

The prophet had before, in this sermon, spoken of a Child that should be born, a Son that should be given, on whose shoulders the government should be; intending this for the comfort of the people of God in times of trouble, as dying Jacob, many ages before, had intended the prospect of Shishak, for the comfort of his seed in their affliction in Egypt. He had said, (ch. x. 27.) that the yoke should be destroyed because of the anointing; now here he tells us on whom that anointing should rest. He foretells, 1. That the Messiah shall, in due time, arise out of the house of David, as that Branch of the Lord, which he had said (ch. iv. 2.) should be exalted and anointed. As to this, some think is referred to, Matth. ii. 23, where it is said to be spoken by the prophets of the Messiah, that he should be called a Nazarene. Observe here, 1. Whence this Branch should arise: from Jesse. He should be the Son of David, with whom the covenant of royalty was made; and to whom it was promised with an oath, that of the fruit of his body God would raise up Christ, Acts i. 30. David is often called the son of Jesse, and Christ is called Jesus, because he was to be not only the Son of David, but David himself, Hos. iii. 5.

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

11. That he should be every way qualified for that great work to which he was designed; that this
tender Branch should be so watered with the dews of heaven, as to become a strong Rod for a sceptre to rule, v. 2.

1. In general; the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. The Holy Spirit, in all his gifts and graces, shall not only come, but rest and abide, upon him; he shall have the Spirit not by measure, but without measure, the fulness of the Spirit, while he lived, John iv. 14. 19. He began his preaching with this, (Luke iv. 18.) The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.

2. In particular; the spirit of government, by which he should be every way fitted for that judgment which the Father has committed to him, and given him authority to execute, John v. 22, 27. And not only so, but he should be made the Father's anointed, the Favour child of God, among all the believers, that from his fulness they might all receive the Spirit of grace, as all the members of the body derive animal spirits from the head. (1.) He shall have the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and knowledge; he shall thoroughly understand the business he is to be employed in. No man knows the Father but the Son, Matth. xi. 27. What he is to make of such children of God, as are concerned in God, and his mind and will, he shall be himself acquainted with and apprised of, John i. 18. He shall know how to administer his spiritual kingdom in all the branches of it, so as effectually to answer the two great intentions of it, the glory of God, and the welfare of the children of men. The terms of the covenant shall be settled by him, and ordinances instituted, in wisdom: treasures of the Godhead dwelling in him, shall be our Counsellor, and shall be made of God to us Wisdom. (2.) The spirit of courage, or might, or fortitude; the undertaking was very great, abundance of difficulty must be broken through, and therefore it was necessary that he should be so endued that he might not fail, or be discouraged, ch. xiii. 1. He was famed for courage in his teaching the way of God in truth, and not caring for any man, Matth. xxii. 16, 17. (3.) The Spirit of religion, or the fear of the Lord; not only he shall himself have a reverent affection for his Father, as his servant, (ch. xiii. 1.) and he was heard in that he feared, (Heb. v. 7.) but he shall have a zeal for religion, and shall design the advancement of it in his whole undertaking. Our faith in Christ was never designed to supersede and jumble out, but toancient and support, our faith in the Godhead dwelling in him; that he should be our Counsellor, and shall be made of God to us Wisdom. (4.) That he should be accurate and critical, and very exact in the administration of his government, and the exercise of the power committed to him; (v. 3.) The Spirit wherewith he shall be clothed, shall make him of quick understanding, in the fear of the Lord; of an acute smell or scent, so the word is, for the apprehensions of the mind are often expressed by the sensations of the body. Note, 1. Those are most truly and valuable intelligent, that are so in the fear of the Lord, in the business of religion, for that is both the foundation and top-stone of wisdom. 2. By this it will appear that we have the Spirit of God, if we have spiritual senses exercized, and are of quick understanding, in the fear of the Lord; those have divine illumination, that know their duty, and know how to go about it. (5.) There was a real grace the Spirit without measure, that he might perfectly understand his undertaking; and he did so, as appears not only in the admirable answers he gave to all that questioned with him, which proved him to be of quick understanding, in the fear of the Lord; but in the management of his whole undertaking. He has settled the great affair of religion so excellingly well, (so as effectually to secure both God's honour and man's happiness,) that it must be owned, he thoroughly understood it.

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

1. Not according to outward appearance; (v. 3.) He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, with respect of persons, (as the world judges,) nor after the outward forms and appearances, nor after the hearing of his ears, by common fame and report, and the representations of others, as men oft do; nor does he judge of men by the fair words they speak, calling him Lord, Lord, or their plausible actions before the eye of the world, which they do to be seen of men; but he will judge by the hidden man of the heart, and the secrets of the heart are as in God, by which he is an infallible Witness. Christ will judge the secrets of men; (Rom. ii. 16.) will determine concerning them, not according to their own pretensions and appearances, that were to judge after the sight of the eyes; not according to the opinion others have of them, that were to judge after the hearing of the ears; but we are sure that his judgment is according to truth, and not according to the observation of the world. He shall judge, according to the righteousness of his Father; righteousness shall be the girdle of his loin; he shall be righteous in the administration of his government, and his righteousness shall be his girdle, it shall constantly compass him and cleave to him, shall be his ornament and honour; he shall gird himself for every action, shall gird on his sword for war in righteousness; his righteousness shall be his strength, and shall stand in favour and defence of his undertakings, as a man with his kins girft. In conformity to Christ, his followers must have the girdle of truth, (Eph. vi. 14;) and it will be the stability of the times. Particularly,

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

(2.) He shall in righteousness plead against his enemies that are proud and oppressors; (v. 4.) But he shall not be as one that oppresseth; (see Ps. xv.) the men of the world, that mind earthly things only; (Ps. xvii.) these he shall smite with the rod of his mouth, the word of his mouth, speaking terror and ruin to them; his threatenings shall take hold of them, and be executed upon them; with the breath of his lips, by the operation of his Spirit, according to his word, and working with the earth, the rod shall smite them. He will do it easily, with a word's speaking, as he laid those flat who came to seize him, by saying, I am he, John xviii. 6. Killing terrors shall arrest their consciences, killing judgments shall ruin them, their power, and all their interests; and in the other world everlasting tribulation will be compensated to those that trouble his poor people. The apostle applies this to the destruction of the wicked one, (2 Thess. ii. 8.) whom the Lord will consume with the spirit of his mouth. And the Chaldee here reads it, He shall say that
wicked Romulus,* or Rome, as Mr. Hugh Broughton understands it.  

V. That there should be great peace and tranquillity under his government; this is an explication of what was said, ch. ix. 6. that he should be the Prince of Peace. Peace signifies two things: 1. Unity and concord; these are intended in these figurative promises, that even the wolf shall dwell peaceably with the lamb; men of the most fierce and furious dispositions, who used to bite and devour all about them, shall have their temper so strangely altered by the efficacy of the gospel and grace of Christ, that they shall live in love even with the weakest, and such as formerly they would have made an easy prey of. So far shall the sheep be ruled by the wolf, and the wolf be ruled by the sheep, that the wolf did not so much as tread on the lamb, nor was the lamb afraid of the wolf. The leopard shall not only not tread the kid, but shall lie down with her; even their young ones shall lie down together, and shall be trained up in a blessed humility, in order to the perpetuating of it. The lion shall cease to be ravenous, and shall eat straw like the ox, as some think all the beasts of the field shall be changed. The lion and the ox, and the cockatrice shall cease to be venomous, so that parents will let their children play with them, and put their hands among them. A generation of vipers shall become a seed of saints, and the old complaint of Homo homini lupus—Man is a wolf to man, shall be at an end. They that inhabit the holy mountain, shall live as amicable and agreeable to each other as the trees in the park, and it shall be a means of their preservation, for they shall not hurt or destroy one another as they have done. Now, (1.) This is fulfilled in the wonderful effect of the gospel upon the minds of those that sincerely embrace it; it changes the nature and makes those that trampled on the neck of the earth, not only meek like them, but kind to them. When they were all ready to devour one another, and join itself to itself, then the wolf shall dwell with the lamb. (2.) Some are willing to hope it shall yet have a further accomplishment in the latter days, when swords shall be beaten into ploughshares.

2. Safety and security; Christ, the great Shepherd, shall take such care of his flock, that those who would hurt them, shall not; they shall not only not destroy one another, but no enemy from without shall be permitted to give them any molestation; the property of trouble, and of death itself, shall be so altered, that they shall not do any real hurt to, much less shall they be the destruction of, any that have their conversation in the holy mountain, 1 Pet. iii. 13. Who, or what, can harm us, if we be followers of him that is good? God's people shall be delivered not only from with but from the fear of it; even the sucking child shall without any terror lie upon the hole of the asp; blessed Paul does so when he says, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? and O death! where is thy sting? Lastly, observe what shall be the effect, and what the cause, of this wonderful softening and sweetening of man's temper and the change of the grace of God. 1. The effect of it shall be, tractableness, and a willingness to receive instruction; a little child shall lead them who formerly scorned to be controlled by the strongest man. Calvin understands it of their willing submission to the ministers of Christ, who are to instruct with meekness, and not to use any coercive power, but to be as little children, Matt. xxi. 5. See 2 Cor. viii. 5. 2. The cause of it shall be, the knowledge of God. The more there is of that, the more there is of a disposition to peace. They shall thus live in love, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, which shall extinguish men's heats and animosities. The better acquainted we are with the God of love, the more we shall be changed into the same image, and the better affected shall we be to all those that bear his image. The earth shall be as full of this knowledge as the channels of the sea are of water; so broad and extensive shall this knowledge be, and so far shall it spread; so deep shall it act on the minds of men; so vast shall this knowledge be, and so long shall it last. There is much more of the knowledge of God to be got by the gospel of Christ, than could be got by the law of Moses; and whereas then in Judah only was God known, now all shall know him, Heb. viii. 11. But that is knowledge falsely so called, which sees discord among men: the right knowledge of God settles peace.

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

We have here a further prophecy of the enlargement and advancement of the kingdom of the Messiah, under the type and figure of the flourishing condition of the kingdom of Judah in the latter end of Hezekiah's reign, after the defeat of Sennacherib. 1. This prediction was in part accomplished when the great things God did for Hezekiah and his people, proved as an ensign, inviting the neighbouring nations to them, to inquire of the wonders.
In the land, on which stood the king of Babylon's ambassadors came. To them the Gentiles sought; and Jerusalem, the rest or habitation of the Jews, with them glorified: the Beth, both the number of the Israelites who belonged to the kingdom of those tribes, who, upon the destruction of that kingdom by the king of Assyria, were forced to flee for shelter into all the countries about, and to some that lay very remote, even to the islands of the sea, were encouraged to return to their own country, and put themselves under the protection and government of the Assyrians; for the Beth, both of those was an Assyrian army by which their country had been ruined, and that was now routed. This is said to be a recovery of them the second time, (ver. 11.) such an instance of the power and goodness of God, and such a reviving to them, as their first deliverance out of Egypt was. Then the outcasts of Israel should be gathered in, and brought home, even those of Judah too, who, upon the approach of the Assyrian army, shifted for their own safety. Then the old feud between Ephraim and Judah shall be forgotten, and they shall join against the Philistines and their other common enemies, ver. 13, 14. Note, Those who have been sharers with each other in afflictions and mercies, dangers and deliverances, in consideration thereof, ought to unite for the support of each other, and be kind to each other, and then it is likely to be well with the church, when Ephraim and Judah are one against the Philistines. Then, whatever difficulties there may be in the way of the return of the dispersed, the Lord shall find out some way or other to remove them; as, when he brought Israel out of Egypt, he dried up the Red sea and Jordan, (ver. 15.) and led them to Canaan through the invincible embarrassments of a vast howling wilderness, ver. 16. The like will be this second time, or that which shall be equivalent; when God's time is come for the deliverance of his people, mountains of opposition shall become plain before him. Let us not despair, therefore, when the interests of the church seem to be brought very low; God can soon turn gloomy days into glorious ones.

It had a farther reference to the days of the Messiah, and the accession of the Gentiles to his kingdom; for to that the apostle applies, ver. 10, of which the following verses are a continuation. Rom. xv. 12. There shall be a root of Jesse; and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust. That is a key to this prophecy, which speaks of Christ as the Root of Jesse, a branch out of his roots, (ver. 1.) a root out of a dry ground, ch. liii. 2. He is the Root of David, (Rev. v. 5.) the Root and Offspring of David, Rev. xix. 16. 1. He shall stand, or be set up, for an Ensign of the people; when he was crucified, he was lifted up from the earth; that, as an Ensign or Signal, he might draw the eyes and hearts of all men to himself; and, as an Image of God, he was in the preaching of the everlasting gospel, in which the ministers, as standard-bearers, display the banner of his love, to allure us to him, (Cant. i. 4.) the banner of his truth, under which we may enlist ourselves to engage in a holy war against sin and Satan. Christ is the ensign to whom the children of God are gathered abroad, are gathered together in, (Rom. xii. 19.) and in whom they meet as the Centre of their unity. 2. To him shall the Gentiles seek; we read of Greeks that did so; John xii. 21. We would see Jesus; and upon that occasion Christ spake of his being lifted up, to draw all men to him. The apostle, from the LXX. (or perhaps the LXX from the apostle, in the editions after Christ,) reads it, (Rom. xiv. 12.) In him shall the Gentiles trust; they shall seek to him with a dependance on him. 3. His root shall be glorious. Some understand it of the death of Christ; the triumphs of the cross made each that glories. Others of his ascension, when he set down to rest at the right hand of God. Or rather, it is meant of the gospel church, that Mount Zion, of which Christ has said, This is my rest; and in which he resides. This, though despised by the world, having upon it the beauty of holiness, is truly glorious; a glorious high throne, Jer. xvi. 12. Both Jews and Gentiles shall be gathered to him. A subject which is very large, in comparison, which shall be recovered, as it were, with great difficulty and hazard. As formerly God delivered his people, and gathered them out of all the countries whither they were scattered, (Ps. cvii. 47. Jer. xvi. 15, 16.) so he will a second time, in another way, by the powerful working of the Spirit of grace with the word. He shall set his hand to do it: he shall exert his power, the arm of the Lord shall be revealed to do it. There shall be a remnant of the Jews gathered in. The outcasts of Israel, and the dispersed of Judah, (ver. 12.) many of whom, at the time of the bringing of them in to Christ, were Jews of the dispersion, the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad, (James i. 1. Pet. i. 1.) these shall flock to Christ; and, probably, they, now dispersed among the Gentiles, shall be brought into the church, in proportion, than those which remained in their own land. (2.) Many of the nations, the Gentiles, shall be brought in by the lifting up of the ensign. Jacob foretold concerning Shiloh, that to him shall the gathering of the people be. Those that were strangers and foreigners, shall be made high. The Jews were jealous of Christ's going to the dispersed among the Gentiles, and of his teaching the Gentiles, John vii. 35. 5. There shall be a happy accommodation between Judah and Ephraim, and both shall be safe from their adversaries, and have dominion over them, ver. 13, 14. The coalescence between Judah and Israel at that time, was a type and figure of the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in the gospel-church, who had been so long at variance. The house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, (Jer. iii. 18.) and become one nation; Ezek. xxxvii. 22. so the Jews and Gentiles are made of twain new men, Eph. ii. 16. And being at peace one with another, those that are adversaries to them both, shall be cut off; for they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines, as an eagle strikes at her prey, shall spoil them. But as the house of Israel, (Ezek. xxxvii. 23.) when they shall extend their conquests eastward, over the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites; the gospel of Christ shall be successful in all parts, and some of all nations shall become obedient to the faith.

Lastly, Every thing that might hinder the progress and success of the gospel, shall be taken out of the way. As when God led Israel out of Egypt, he dried up the Red sea and Jordan before them, (ch. lxxii. 11, 12.) and as afterward when he brought up the Jews out of Babylon, he prepared them their way; (ch. xlii. 16.) so when Jews and Gentiles are to be brought together into the gospel-church, all obstructions shall be removed, (ver. 15, 16.) difficulties that seemed insuperable shall be strangely got over by the help of the Lord. See ch. xlii. 15, 16.—xliii. 19, 20. Converts shall be brought in chariots and in litters, ch. lxvi. 20. Some think it is the further accession of multitudes to the church, that is pointed at in that obscure prophecy of the drying up of the river Euphrates, that the way of the kings of the east may be prepared, (Rev. xvi. 12.) which seems to refer to this here. Note, When God's time is come for the bringing of nations, or par-
ticular persons, home to himself, divine grace will be victorious over all opposition. At the presence of the Lord, the sea shall flee, and Jordan be driven back: and those who set their faces heaven-ward find there are not such difficulties in the way as they thought there were, for there is a highway thither; ch. xxxv. 8.

CHAP. XII.

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

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

This is the former part of the hymn of praise which is prepared for the use of the church; of the Jewish church, when God would work great deliverances for them, and of the Christian church when the kingdom of the Messiah should be set up in the world, in despite of the opposition of the powers of darkness; In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee. The scattered church, being united into one body, shall, as one man, with one mind and one mouth, thus praise God, who is one, and his name one. In that day, when the Lord shall do these great things for thee, thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee. That is, 1. "Thou shalt have cause to say so." The promise is sure, and the blessings contained in it are very rich, and, when they are bestowed, will burnish the church with abundant matter for rejoicing, and therefore with abundant matter for thanksgiving. The Old Testament prophecies of gospel-times are often expressed by the joy and praise that shall then be excited; for the inestimable benefits we enjoy by Jesus Christ, require the most elevated and enlarged thanksgivings.

2. "Thou shalt have a heart to say so." All God's other gifts to his people shall be crowned with this; he will give them grace to ascribe all the glory of them to him, and to speak of them upon all occasions, with thanksgiving. Thou shalt say, thou oughtest to say so. In that day, when many are brought home to Jesus Christ, and flock to him as doves to their windows, in streams like rivers, and the Jews gathered as the Jerusalemites sung the favour shown to the Gentiles, thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee. Note, We ought to rejoice in, and give thanks for, the grace of God to others as well as to ourselves.

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

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

2. Nay, God sometimes brings his people into a wilderness, that there he may speak comfortably to them, Hosea ii. 14. (4.) The turning away of God's anger, and the return of his comforts to us, ought to be the matter of our joyful, thankful praises.

3. They are taught to triumph in God, and their interest in him; (v. 2.) "Behold, and wonder; God is my salvation; not only my Saviour, by whom I am saved, but my Salvation, in whom I am safe. I depend upon him as my Salvation, for I have found him to be so. He shall have the glory of all the salvations that have been wrought for me, and from me, I shall never be free. I shall further need, and not from hills and mountains; and if God be my Salvation, if he undertake my eternal salvation, I will trust in him to prepare for it, and preserve me to it. I will trust him with my temporal concerns, not doubting but he will make all to work for my good. I will be confident, I will be always easy in my own mind." Note, Those that have God for their Salvation, may enjoy themselves with a holy security and serenity of mind; let faith in God, as our Salvation, be effectual. (1.) To silence our fears; we must trust, and not be afraid; not be afraid that the God we trust in will fail us; no, there is no danger of that; not be afraid of any creature, though ever so formidable and threatening. Note, Faith in God is a sovereign remedy against distrust, that is, against fearing fears. (2.) To support our hopes. Is the Lord Jehovah our Salvation? Then he will be our Strength and Song. We have work to do and temptations to resist, we may depend upon him to enable us for both; to strengthen us with all might by his Spirit in the inner man, for he is our strength; his grace is so, and that grace shall be sufficient for us. We have many burdens to bear; he will be our support in griefs in a vale of tears; and we may depend upon him to comfort us in all our tribulations, for he is our Song, he giveth songs in the night. If we make God our strength, and put our confidence in him, he will be our strength; if we make him our Song, and place our comfort in him, he will be our Song. Many good Christians have God for their Strength, not only for the moment, but for all time; many walk in darkness, but light is sown for them; and they that have God for their Strength, ought to make him their Song, that is, to give him the glory of it, (see Ps. lxviii. 33.) and to take to themselves the comfort of it, for he will become their Salvation. Observe the title here given to God, Jah, Jehovah; Jah is the contraction of Jehovah, and both signify his eternity and unchangeableness; which
The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see. 2. Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, reads it) proclaim his name; let others know some thing more from us than they did before, concerning God, and those things whereby he has made himself known. Declare his doings, his counsel; so some read it; the work of redemption is according to the counsel of his will; and in that and other wonderful works that he has done, we must take notice of his power and wisdom, and our admiration must be inexpressible.

5. Declare these among the people, among the heathen, that they may be brought into communion with Israel and the God of Israel. When the apostles preached the gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, then this scripture was fulfilled, that his doing should be declared among the people, and that what he has done should be known in all the earth. (By the Spirit of the Lord.) By the Spirit of the Lord and prophet of joy, "Cry out and shout, welcome the repsect to yourselves, and publish it to others with huzzas and loud acclamations, as those that shout for victory, (Exod. xxxii. 18.) or for the coronation of a king." Numb. xxii. 21.

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

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

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

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

2. How they must praise the Lord: (1.) By prayer we must call upon his name; as giving thanks for former mercy is a decent way of begging further mercy, so begging further mercy is graciously accepted as a thankful acknowledgment of the mercies we have received. In calling upon God's name we indicate our faith in him; for the name of God is that blessed name which we ought to make as powerful and useful in the name of God by the name of the Lord; and this chapter, and that which follows, contain what God had to say to Babylon and Babylon's king, who were at present little known to Israel, but would in process of time become a greater enemy to them than any that had been before; and which, when shall last reckon with them. In this chapter, we have, I. A general rendezvous of the forces that were to be employed against Babylon, v. 1. 5. II. The dreadful bloody work that was to be done, and the degrees that should be taken in Babylon, v. 6. 18. III. The utter ruin and desolation of Babylon, which this should end in. v. 19. 22.
exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles. 3. I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anoint, even them that rejoice in my highness. 4. The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the Lord of hosts mustersheth the host of the battle. 5. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the Lord, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land.

The general title of this book was, The visions of Isaiah the son of Amoz, ch. i. 1. This is that which Isaiah did see, which was represented to his mind as clearly and fully as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes; but the particular inscription of this scroll is, is the burden of Babylon: 1. It is a burden, a lesson they were to learn; some understand it; but they would be loath to learn it, and it would be a burden to their memories, or a load which should lie heavy upon them, and under which they should sink. Those that will not make the word of God their rest, (ch. xxviii. 17. Jer. vi. 1.) shall be made a burden and a burden upon Babylon. Babylon or Babel, which at this time was a dependent upon the Assyrian monarchy, (the metropolis of which was Nineveh,) but soon after revolted from it, and became a monarchy of itself, and a very potent one, in Nebuchadnezzar. This prophet afterward foretold the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, ch. xxxix. 6. Here he foreshows the purpose which God had made upon Babylon for the wrongs done to his people.

In these verses a simile is given to those powerful and warlike nations, whom God would make use of as the instruments of his wrath for the destruction of Babylon: he afterward names them (v. 17.) the Medes, who, in conjunction with the Persians under the command of Darius and Cyrus, were to furnish the instruments of God's judgments (see Daniel x. 2. 3.) The place doomed to destruction is Babylon; it is here called the gates of the nobles, (v. 2.) because in the abundance of noblemen's houses that were in it; stately ones, and richly furnished, which would invite the enemy to come, in hopes of a rich booty. The gates of nobles were strong and well guarded, and yet they would be no fence against the hosts that came with commission to execute God's judgments. Before his power and wrath, palaces are no more than cottages; nor is it only the gates of the nobles, but the whole land, that is doomed to destruction; (v. 5.) for though the nobles were the leaders in persecuting and oppressing God's people, yet the whole land concurred with them in it.

(2.) The instruments of Babylon's destruction are here called, [1.] God's sanctified ones, (v. 3.) designed for this service, and set apart to it by the purpose and providence of God; disregaged from other projects, that they might wholly apply themselves to this; such as were qualified for that to which they were called; for what work God employs men in, he does in some measure fit them for it. Isaiah, in God's estimate, was not the first in the hands of God; Cyrus, in God's estimation, was not in theirs, it was a holy war; they designed only the enlargement of their own empire, but God designed the release of his people, and a type of the destruction of the New Testament Babylon. Cyrus, the person principally concerned, was justly called a sanctified one, for he was God's anointed, (ch. xlv. 1.) and a figure of him that was to come. It is a pity but all soldiers, especially those that fight the Lord's battles, should be, in the strictest sense, sanctified ones; it is a wonder they dare be profane ones, who carry their lives in their hands. [2.] They are called God's mighty ones, because they had their might from God, and were new to use it for him. It is said of Cyrus, that in this expedition God held his right hand, ch. xlv. 1. God's sanctified ones are his mighty ones; whom God calls, he qualifies; and whom he makes holy, he makes strong in spirit. [3.] They are said to rejoice in his highness, to serve his glory and the purposes of it with great acumen. Though Cyrus did not know God, nor actually design his honour in what he did, yet God used him as his servant; (ch. xlv. 4. I have exalted, as my servant, thou known me) and he rejoiced in those successes by which God exalted his own name. [4.] They are very numerous, a multitude, a great people; kingdoms of nations, (v. 4.) not rude and barbarous, but modelled and regular troops, such as are furnish'd out by well-ordered kingdoms: the great God has hosts at his command. [5.] They are far-rioted, they come from the end of heaven; the vast country of Assyria lay between Babylon and Persia. God can make these a scourge and ruin to his enemies that lie most remote from them, and therefore are least dreaded.

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

6. Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. 7. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: 8. And they shall be afraid; pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be as pain as a woman that travaileth; they shall be as amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. 9. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate, and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. 10. For the stars of heaven, and the
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11. It will be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. 11. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. 12. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man turn the golden wedge of Ophir. 13. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger. 14. And it shall be as the chased roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up: they shall every man turn to his own people, and flee every one into his own land. 15. Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is joined unto them shall fall by the sword. 16. Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished. 17. Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. 18. Their bowels also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children.

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

1. God is about to appear in wrath against them, and it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands; The day of the Lord is at hand, (v. 6.) a little day of judgment, when God will act as a just Avenger of his own and his people's injured cause. And there are those who will have reason to tremble when the day is at hand: the day of the Lord cometh, v. 9. 2. Men have their day now, and they think to carry the day; but God laughs at them, for he sees that this day is coming, Ps. lxxvii. 13. Fury is not with God, and yet his day of reckoning with the Babylonians is said to be cruel with wrath and fierce anger. God will deal in severity with them for the enormities they exercised upon God's people; with the forward, with the cruel, he will show himself forward, will show himself cruel, and give the blood-thirsty blood to drink.

2. Their hearts shall fail them, and they shall have neither courage nor comfort left; they shall not be able either to resist the judgment coming, or to bear up under it, either to oppose the enemy, or to support themselves, v. 7, 8. They that in the day of the Lord shall be found to be proud, and haughty, and terrible, (v. 11.) are, when trouble and sorrow come, quite dispirited, and are at their wits' end; all hands shall be faint, and unable to hold a weapon, and every man's heart shall melt, so that they shall be ready to die for fear. The pangs of their fear shall be like those of a woman in hard labour, and they shall be amazed one at another; in frightening themselves, they shall frighten one another; they shall wonder to see those tremble, that used to be bold and daring; or, they shall be amazed, looking one at another as men at a loss, Gen. xi. 1. Their faces shall be as flames, their eyes as flames, their fear; so some; or red as flames sometimes are, blushing at their own cowardice; or their faces shall be as faces scorched with the flames, or as theirs that labour in the fire, their visage blacker than a coal; or like a bottle in the smoke, Ps. cxxix. 83.

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

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

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

6. There shall be a universal confusion and consternation; such a confusion of their affairs, that it shall be like the shaking of the heavens, with dreadful thunders, and the removing of the earth, by no less dreadful earthquakes. All shall go to wreck and ruin in the day of the Lord, that terrifies all nations; v. 20. And such a consternation shall seize their spirits, that Babylon, which used to be like a roaring lion, and a raging bear, to all about her, shall become as a chased roe, and as a sheep that no man takes up, v. 14. The army they shall bring into the field, consisting of troops of divers nations, (as great armies usually do,) shall be so dispersed by their enemies' swarms, that no one man shall have the command of one troop, each man shall shift for his own safety; the men of might shall not find their hands, (Ps. lxxvi. 5.) but take to their heels.

8. There shall be a general scene of blood and horror, as is usual where the sword devours. No wonder that every one makes the best of his way, since the conqueror gives no quarter, but puts all to the sword, and not those only that are found in arms, as is usual with us even in the most cruel
Every one that is found alive, shall be run through, as soon as ever it appears that he is a Babylonian. Nay, because the sword devours one as well as another, every one that is joined to them, shall fall by the sword; those of other nations that come in to their assistance, shall be cut off with them. It is dangerous being in bad company, and helping those whom God is about to destroy, for the perishing of others that join themselves to Babylon, must expect to share in her plagues, Rev. xviii. 4. And since the most sacred laws of nature, and humanity itself, are silenced by the fury of war, (though they cannot be cancelled,) the conquerors shall, in the most barbarous brutish manner, dash the children to pieces, and ravish the wives. Jusque daemon-sieurs,—Wickedness shall have its effect, v. 14. They had thus dealt with God's people, (Lam. v. 11.) and now they shall be paid in their own coin, Rev. iii. 10. It was particularly foretold, (Ps.cxxxi. 9.) that the little ones of Babylon should be dashed against the stones. How cruel, sover, and unjust, they were that did it, God was righteous who suffered it to be done, and to be done before their eyes, to their great terror and vexation. It was justly so. There were houses which they had filled with the spoil of Israel, should be spoiled and plundered. What is got by rapine, is often lost in the same manner.

8. The enemy that God would send against them, should be inexorable, probably being by some provocation or other more than ordinarily exasperated against them; or, however, God himself will stir up the Medes, shall make thorough work of it. For

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

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

CHAP. XIV.

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

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

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

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

II. The particular favours he designeth them.

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

2. Many should be procured to their holy religion, and should return with them, induced to do so by the manifest tokens of God’s favourable presence with them, the operations of God’s grace in them, and his providence for them; Strangers shall be joined with them, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you, Zech. viii. 23. It adds much to the honour and strength of Israel, when strangers are joined with them, and there are added to the church many from without, Acts ii. 47. Let not the church’s children be shy of strangers, but receive those whom God receives, and two or three to them as to the advice of Christ.

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

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

5. They should triumph over their enemies; and they that would not be reconciled to them, should be reduced and humbled by them; They shall take them captives, whose captives they were, and shall rule over their oppressors, righteously, but not re-vengefully. 6. They should not only secure their liberty, but secure those for other Israelites, so that Babylonian prisoners out of the hands of the Medes and Persians, and made slaves of them: or this might have its accomplishment in the victories over their enemies in the times of the Maccabees. It is applicable to the success of the gospel, when those were brought into obedience to it, who had made the greatest opposition to it, as Paul; it is applicable to the interest believers have in G o d ’s bles- sed change: (1.) In their state; they shall have rest from their bondage; the days of their affliction, though many, shall have an end; and the rod of the wicked, though it lie long, shall not always lie, or their lot. (2.) In their spirit; they shall have rest from their sorrow and fear, sense of their present burdens, and dread of worse. Sometimes fear puts the soul into a ferment as much as sorrow does, and those most needs feel themselves very easy, to whom God has given rest from both. They who are freed
from the bondage of sin, have a foundation laid for true rest from sorrow and fear.

4. That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! 5. The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers. 6. He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth.

7. The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet; they break forth into singing. 8. Yea, the fir-trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us.

9. Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

10. All they shall speak, and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? 11. Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.

12. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! 13. For thou hast said in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

14. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. 15. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. 16. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms?

17. That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? 18. All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house:

19. But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcass trodden under feet. 20. Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people; the seed of evildoers shall never be renowned.

21. Prepare slaughter for his children, for the iniquity of their fathers; that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities.

22. For I will rise up against them, saith the Lord, and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, saith the Lord. 23. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the Lord of hosts.

The kings of Babylon, successively, were the great enemies and oppressors of God's people, and therefore the destruction of Babylon, the fall of the king, and the ruin of his family, are here particularly taken notice of and triumphed in; in the day that God has given Israel rest, the shall take by the prophet, and the king by Babylon. We must not rejoice when our enemy falls, as ours; but when Babylon, the common enemy of God and his Israel, sinks, then rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, Rev. xviii. 20.

The Babylonian monarchy bade fair to be an absolute, universal, and perpetual one, and, in these pretensions, vied with the Almighty; it is therefore very justly, not only brought down, but insulted over when it is down; and it is not only the last monarch, Belshazzar, who was slain on that night that Babylon was taken, (Dan. v. 30.) who is here triumphed over, but the whole monarchy, which sunk in him: not without special reference to Nebuchadnezzar, in whom that monarchy was at its height. 5.

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

In this perusal we may observe:

1. The prodigious height of wealth and power at which this monarch and monarchy arrived. Babylon was a golden city, (v. 4.) It is a Chaldee word in the original, which intimates that she used to call herself so; she abounded in riches, and excelled all other cities, as gold does all other metals. She is gold-thirsty, or an exactress of gold; so some read it for how do men get wealth to themselves, but by squeezing it out of others? The New Jerusalem is the only truly golden city, Rev. xxi. 18, 21.

2. The king of Babylon, having so much wealth in his dominions, and the absolute command of it, by the help of that ruled the nations, (v. 6.) gave them law, read them their doom, and, at his pleasure, weakened the nations, (v. 12.) that they might not be able to make their steps against him. His terrible armies did he bring into the field, that, which way soever he looked, he made the earth to tremble, and shook kingdoms; (v. 16.) all his neighbours were afraid of him, and were forced to submit to him. No one man could do this by his own personal strength, but by the numbers he had at his beck. Great tyrants, by making some do not they will, what others suffer by their pleasure. How pitious is the case of mankind, which thus seems to be in a combination against itself, and its own rights and liberties, which could not be ruined but by its own strength.

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

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

I ascend, and be as great as he; I will be like him whom they call the Most High." It is a gracious ambition to covet to be like the Most Holy, for he has said, Be ye holy; for I am holy; but it is a sinful ambition to aim to be like the Most High, for he has said, He who exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he who humbleth himself, shall be exalted. We have therefore no reason to think the desire in Zion's princes to be great in earth and heaven, was a curse to mankind, nor that it should be as gods. [5.] That he shall himself be dripped after his death, as some of the first founders of the Assyrian monarchy were, and stars had even their names from them, "But," (says he) "I will exalt my throne above them all." Such as this was his pride, which was the undeserved claim of his destruction.

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

(1.) It is foretold that his wealth and power should be broken, and a final period put to his pomp and pleasures; he has been long an oppressor, but he shall cease to be, v. 5. Had he ceased to be so by true repentance and reformation, according to the advice Daniel gave to Nebuchadnezzar, it might have been a lengthening of his life and tranquillity. But these that will not cease to sin, God will make to cease. The golden city, which, one would have thought, might have continued for ever, is ceased; there is an end of that Babylon. The Lord, the righteous God, has broken the staff of that wicked prince, broken it over his head, in token of the di- sgrace and downfall of his greatness and power, as he that is accounted from him, and disabled him to do any more mischief: he has broken the sceptres; for even those are brittle things, soon broken, and often justly.

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

(3.) That he should be slain, and go down to the congregation of the dead, to be free among them, as the slain that are no more remembered, Ps. cxlviii.

They shall not be gathered together, they shall not be accounted; they shall be as though they had never been; v. 10. His pomp is brought down to the grave, it perishes with him; the pomp of his life shall not, as usual, end in a funeral pomp. True glory, that is, true grace, will go up with the soul to heaven, but vain pomp will go down with the body to the grave, there is an end of it. The noise of his viols is now heard no more; death is a farewell to the pleasures, as well as to the pomp of this world. This mighty prince, that used to lie on a bed of down, and tread upon rich carpets, and to have covering and canopies exquisitely fine, now shall have the worms spread under him, and the worms covering him, (v. 11.) worms bred out of his own putrefying body, which, though he fancied himself a god, proved him to be made of the same mould with other men. When we are pampering and decking our bodies, it is good to remember they will be worms' meat shortly.

(4.) That he should not have the honour of a burial, much less of a decent one, and in the sepulchres of his ancestors; The kings of the nations lie in glo- ry; (v. 18.) either the dead bodies themselves, so embalmed as to be preserved from putrefaction, as of old among the Egyptians; or their effigies (as with us) erected over their graves. Thus, as if they would defy the ignominy of death, they lay in a poor, faint sort of glory, every one in his own house, his own burying-place; for the grave is the house appointed for all living, a sleeping-house, where the busy and troublesome will be quiet, and the tru
nked and weary lie at rest. But this king of Babylon is cast out, and has no grave; (v. 19.) his dead body is thrown, like that of a Beast, into the next City, to be trodden under foot by the discordant branch of some noxious, poisonous plant, which nobody will touch; or as the clothes of malefactors put to death, and by the hand of justice thrust through with a sword, on whose dead bodies heaps of stones are raised, or they are thrown into some deep quarry, among the stones of the pit. Nay, the king of Babylon's dead body is cast into a battle, who are trodden under foot by the horses and soldiers, and crushed to pieces: thus he shall not be joined with his ancestors in burial, v. 20. To be denied decent burial is a disgrace, which, if it be inflicted for righteousness sake (as Ps. Lxxix. 2.) may, as other similar reproaches, be rejected in; (Matt. v. 12.) it is the lot of the two witnesses. Rev. xi. 9. But if, as here, it be the just punishment of iniquity, it is an intimation that evil pursues impious sinners beyond death, greater evil than that, and that they shall rise to everlasting shame and contempt.

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

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

(2.) The congregation of the dead will bid him welcome to them, especially those whom he had barbarously hastened thither; (v. 9, 10.) "Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming, and to complain thee upon thy arrival at their dark and dreadful regions." The chief ones of the earth, who, when they were alive, were kept in awe by him, and durst not come near him, but rose from their thrones, to resign them to him, these shall share with him the dishonouring of the princes, and great men, who are complained of to fir-trees and cedars, (Zech. xi. 2.) may now be easy, and out of fear of being despised of their rights, for the hammer of the whole earth is cut asunder and broken, (Jer. I. 23.) the axe that boasted itself against him that hewed with it, ch. x. 15.

(3.) Spectators will stand amazed at his fall. When he shall be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit, and to be lodged there, (v. 13.) they that see him shall narrowlv look upon him, and consider him, they shall scarcely believe their own eyes; neither was death so great a change to any man as it is to him. He that a few hours ago looked so great, so pleasant, and so splendidly adorned and attended, should now look so ghastly, so despicable, and lie thus naked and neglected? Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, and shook kingdoms? Who would have thought he should ever have come to this? Psalm cxxxii. 7.

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

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

1. The royal family is to be wholly extirpated. The Medes and Persians that are to be employed in this destroying work, are ordered, when they have taken their city, to destroy the children, (v. 21.) and not to spare them; the little ones of Babylon must be dashed against the stones, Ps. cxxxvi. 9. These orders sound very harsh; but, (1.) They must suffer for the iniquity of their fathers, which is often visited upon the children, to show how much God hates sin, and is displeased at it, and to deter sinners from it, which is the end of punishment. Nebuchadnezzar had slain Zedekiah's sons, (Jer. lii. 10.) and for that iniquity of his, his seed are paid in the same coin. (2.) They must be cut off now, that they may not rise up to possess the land, and do as much mischief in their day as their fathers had done in theirs; that they may not be as vexations to the world by building cities for the support of their tyranny, (which was Nineveh's policy.) 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had determined to cut off the name and remnant of it, so that none should be left, to have both the sons and grandsons of the king shut; and yet we are sure he never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures.

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

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

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

1. Assurance given of the destruction of the Assyrians; (v. 25.) I will break the Assyrian in my land. Snannacherib brought a very formidable army into the land of Judah, but there God broke it, and delivered us all into their hands. The breaking of the neck of the ass is called the breaking of the yoke, "the yoke of angels at command." Note, Those who wrongfully invade God's land, shall find it is at their peril, and those who with unshilled feet trample upon his holy mountains, shall themselves there be trodden under foot. God undertakes to do it himself, his people having no might against the great company that came against them; "I will break the Assyrian; let me alone to tread them, and who shall set up a speech against me?" Now the breaking of the power of the Assyrian would be the breaking of the yoke from off the neck of God's people. His burden shall depart from off their shoulders, the burden of quartering that vast army, and paying contribution; therefore the Assyrian must be broken, that Judah and Jerusalem may be eased. Let those that make themselves a yoke and a burden to God's people, see what they are doing and suffer.
(v. 28.) when a good king came in the room of a bad one, then this acceptable message was sent among them. When we reform, then, and not till then, we may look for good news from heaven. Now here we have,

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

2. A prophecy of the destruction of the Philistines by famine and war. (1.) By famine; (v. 30.) when the people of God, whom the Philistines had wronged and preyed upon, should take defence, and as the Philistines had other ways of obtaining their living and subsistence, so they, in default of theirs, should be driven to the way of the meanest and most degrading wants. (2.) By war; when the needy of God's people shall lie down in safety, (v. 30.) not terrified with the alarms of war, but delighting in the songs of peace, then every gate and every city of the Philistines shall be howling and crying, (v. 31.) and there shall be a total dissolution of their state; for from Jucdea, which lay north of the Philistines, there shall come a smoke, a vast army raising a great dust, a smoke that shall be the indication of a devouring fire at hand; and none of all that army shall be alone in his appointed times; none shall struggle or be missing when they are to engage; but they shall be vigorous and unmerciful in attacking the common enemy, when the time appointed for the doing of it comes. None of them shall decline the public service, as, in Deborah's time, Reuben abode among the sheepfolds, and Asher on the sea-shore, Judg. v. 16, 17. When God has work to do, he will wonderfully endow and dispose men for it.

III. The good use that should be made of all these promises, and encouragements of the people of God; (v. 32.) What shall one then answer the messengers of the nations? This implies, 1. That the great things God does for his people, are, and cannot but be, taken notice of by their neighbours; they among the heathen make remarks upon them, Ps. cxxxvi. 2. 2. That messengers will be sent to inquire concerning them. Jacob and Israel had long been a pod from the pods of all others, had dignified with uncommon favours; and therefore some, for good-will, others, for ill-will, and all, for curiosity, are inquisitive concerning them. 3. That it concerns us always to be ready to give a reason of the hope that we have in the providence of God, as well as in his grace, in answer to every one that asks it, with meekness and fear, 1 Pet. iii. 15. And we need go no further than the sacred truths of God's word, for a reason; for God, in all he does, is fulfilling the scripture. 4. The issue of God's dealings with his people shall be so clearly and manifestly glorious, that any one, every one, shall be able to give an account of them, and of his doings in them concerning them. Now the answer which is to be given to the messengers of the nations, is, (1.) That God is, and will be, a faithful Friend to his church and people, and will secure and advance their interests. Tell them that the Lord has founded Zion. This gives an account both of the work itself that is done, and of the reason of it. What is God doing in the world? He does it, and he does it for the revolutions of states and kingdoms, in the ruin of some nations, and the rise of others? He is, in all this, founding Zion; he is aiming at the advancement of his church's interests; and what he aims at he will accomplish. The messengers of the nations, when they sent to inquire concerning Hezekiah's successes against the Philistines, expected to learn what policies, counsels, and arts of war, he carried to his point; they are told that they were not owing to any thing of that nature, but to the care God took of his church, and the interest he had in it. The Lord has founded Zion, and therefore the Philistines must fall. (2.) That his church has, and will have, a dependence upon him; The poor of his people shall trust in it, his poor people who have been brought very low, even into the hands of them, trusting God him and his, and others, for they have nothing else to trust to; (Zeph. iii. 12, 13.) the poor receive the gospel, Matl. xi. 5. They shall trust to this, to this great truth, that the Lord has founded Zion; on this they shall build their hopes, and not on an arm of flesh. This ought to give us abundant satisfaction as to public affairs, that, however it goes with particular persons, parties, and interests of men, God has founded his Zion, for its Foundation, cannot but stand firm; The poor of his people shall betake themselves to it; so some read it; shall join themselves to his church, and embark in its interests; they shall concur with God in his designs to establish his people, and shall wind up all on the same plan, and make all their little concerns and projects bend to that. They that take God's people for their people, must be willing to take their lot with them, and cast in their lot among them. Let the messengers of the nations know that the poor Israelites, who trust in God, having, like Zion, their foundation in the holy mountains, (Ps. lxvii. 1.) are like Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides for ever, (Ps. cxxxv. 1.) and therefore they will not fear what man can do unto them.

CHAP. XV.

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

1. The burden of Moab. Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, and brought to silence; because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste, and brought to silence: 2. He is gone up to Bajuthi,
to Dibon, the high places, toweep: Moab shall howl over Nebo, and over Medeba; on all their heads shall be baldness, and every beard cut off. 3. In their streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth: on the tops of their houses, and in their streets every one shall howl, weeping abundantly.

4. And Heshbon shall cry, and Elealeh: their voice shall be heard even unto Jahaz: therefore the armed soldiers of Moab shall cry out; his life shall be grievous unto him. 5. My heart shall cry out for Moab; his fugitives shall flee unto Zoor, a heifer of three years old: for by the mounting up of Luhith with weeping shall they go it up; for in the way of Horonaim they shall raise up a cry of destruction.

The country of Moab was of small extent, but very fruitful; it bordered upon the lot of Reuben on the other side Jordan, and upon the Dead sea. Naomi went to squabble there, when there was a famine in Canaan. This is the country which (it is here fore-told) should be wasted and grievously harassed; not quite ruined, for we find another prophecy of its ruin, (Jer. 48.) which was accomplished by Nebuchadnezzar. To the prophet Amos he was to be fulfilled within three years, (ch. xvi. 14.) and therefore was fulfilled in the devastations made of that country by the army of the Assyrians, which for many years ravaged those parts, enriching themselves with spoil and plunder. It was done either by the army of Sennacherib, about the time of the taking of Samaria in the fourth year of Hezekiah, (2 Chron. xxviii. 17,) or by the army of Sechemmah, which, ten years after, invaded Judah. We cannot suppose that the prophet went among the Moabites to preach them this sermon; but he delivered it to his own people. (1.) To show them, that though judgment begins at the house of God, it shall not end there; that there is a Providence which governs the world and all the nations of it; and that to the God of Israel the worshippers of false gods were accountable, and liable to his judgments. (2.) To give them a proof of God's care of them and jealousy for them; and to convince them that God was an Enemy to their enemies, for such the Moabites had often been. (3.) That the accomplishment of this prophecy, now shortly, (within three years,) might be a confirmation of the prophet's mission, and of the truth of all his other prophecies, and might encourage the faithful to depend upon them.

Now concerning Moab, it here foretold, 1. That their chief cities should be surprised and taken in a night by their enemy, probably because the inhabitants, as the men of Lash, indulged themselves in ease and luxury, and dwelt securely; (v. 1.) Therefore there shall be great grief, because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, and Kir of Moab; the two principal cities of that kingdom. In the night that they were taken, or sacked, Moab was cut off. The seizing of them laid the whole country open, and made all the wealth of it easy prey to the victorious army. Note, (1.) Great changes and very dismal ones may be made in a very little time. Here are two cities lost in a night, though that is the time of quietness: let us therefore lie down as those that know not what a night may bring forth. (2.) As the country feeds the cities, so the cities protect the country, and neither can say to the other, I have no need of thee. 2. That the Moabites, being hereby put into the utmost consternation imaginable, should have recourse to their idols for relief, and pour out their tears before them; (v. 2.) He, that is, Moab, especially the king of Moab, is gone up to Bajitt, or rather, to the house or temple of Chemosh; and Dibon, the inhabitants of Dibon, are gone up to the high places, where they worshipped their idols, to comfort themselves in their complaints. Note, It becomes a people in distress to seek the God of their fathers, but we then thus walk in the name of the Lord our God, and call upon him in the time of trouble, before whom we shall not shed such useless profitable tears as they did before their gods.

3. That there should be the voice of universal grief; all the country over. It is described here elegantly and very affectingly. Moab shall be a vale of tears; a little map of that which is to follow. 2. The Moabites shall lament the loss of Nebo and Medeba, two considerable cities, which, it is likely, were plundered and burnt. They shall tear their hair for grief, to that degree, that on all their heads shall be baldness, and they shall cut off their beards, according to the customary expressions of mourning in most of the Eastern countries. When they go abroad, they shall be so far from being welcome, as some, that in the streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth; and perhaps being forced to use that poor clothing, the enemies having stripped them, and rifled their houses, and left them another clothing. When they come home, instead of applying themselves to their business, they shall go up to the house of their gods, which were flat-roofed, and there they shall weep abundantly. They shall howl, in crying to their gods: those that cry not to God with their hearts, do but howl upon their beds, Hos. vii. 14. Amos viii. 3. They shall come down with weeping; so the margin reads it: they shall come down from their high places and the tops of their houses, weeping as much as they did when they went up. Prayer to the true God is heart's-ease, (1 Sam. i. 18,) but prayers to false gods are not. Divers places are here named, that should be full of lamentation, (v. 4,) and it is but a poor relief to have so many fellow-sufferers, fellow-mourners; to a public spirit it is rather an aggravation, socios habuisse doloris—have associates in wo. 4. That all of their militia should fail them; though they were bred soldiers, and were well armed, yet they shall cry out, and shriek, for fear, and every one of them shall have his life become grievous to him; though it is a military life, which delights in danger, v. 4. See how easily God can dispirit the stoutest of men, and deprive a nation of benefit, by those whom it most depended on for the support of it. If strength and defence. The Moabites shall generally be so overwhelmed with grief, that their life itself shall be a burthen to them. God can easily make weary of life those that are fondest of it. 5. That the outcry for these calamities should propagate grief to all the adjacent parts, v. 5. (1.) The prophet himself has very sensible impressions made upon his spirit by the prediction of it: "My heart shall cry out for Moab; they are our enemies; to us they are the stoutest of men, and shall come up to fight against us." Note, God becomes his minister's greatest comforter in time of trouble. (2.) The prophet himself has very sensible impressions made upon his spirit by the prediction of it: "My heart shall cry out for Moab; they are our enemies; to us they are the stoutest of men, and shall come up to fight against us." Note, God becomes his minister's greatest comforter in time of trouble. (2.) The prophet himself has very sensible impressions made upon his spirit by the prediction of it: "My heart shall cry out for Moab; they are our enemies; to us they are the stoutest of men, and shall come up to fight against us." Note, God becomes his minister's greatest comforter in time of trouble. (2.) The prophet himself has very sensible impressions made upon his spirit by the prediction of it: "My heart shall cry out for Moab; they are our enemies; to us they are the stoutest of men, and shall come up to fight against us." Note, God becomes his minister's greatest comforter in time of trouble. (2.) The prophet himself has very sensible impressions made upon his spirit by the prediction of it: "My heart shall cry out for Moab; they are our enemies; to us they are the stoutest of men, and shall come up to fight against us." Note, God becomes his minister's greatest comforter in time of trouble.
shift for their own safety, shall carry the cry to Zoor, the city to which their ancestor Lot fled for shelter from Sodom's flames, which was spared for his sake, who despised it. The great number of their cry, as a heifer of three years old does, when she goes loving for her calf, as 1 Sam. vi. 12. They shall go up the hill of Lubith, as David went up the ascent of mount Olivet, many a weary step, and all in tears, 2 Sam. xv. 30. And in the way of Horon-maim, (a dual termination,) the way that leads to the two Beth-horons, the upper and the nether, which we read of, Josh. xvi. 3, 5. Neither shall they be carried, there it should be raised; even at that great distance, a cry of destruction, shall be the cry; like, "Fire, fire, we are all undone." Grief is catching, so is fear, and justly, for trouble is spreading, and when it begins, who knows where it will end.

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

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

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

1. The waters of Nimrim are desolate, (v. 6.) The country is plundered, and all the wealth and substance of it swept away by the victorious army. Famine is usually the sad effect of war. Look into the fields that were well watered, the fruitful meadows that yielded delightful prospects, and more delightful products, and there all is eaten up, or carried off by the enemy's foragers, and the remainder trodden to the ground. If an army encamp upon those fields, their greenness is soon dispelled into the houses, and they are stripped too; (v. 7.)

The abundance of wealth that they had gotten with a great deal of art and industry, and that which they have laid up with a great deal of care and confidence, shall they carry away to the brook of the willows. Either the owners shall carry it thither to hide it, their houses shall carry it thither to pack it up, and send it home, by water perhaps, to their own country. Note, (1.) Those that are eager to get abundance of this world, and solicitous to lay up what they have gotten, little consider what may become of it, and in how little a time it may be all taken from them. Great abundance, by tempting the robbers, exposes the owners; and they that would not depend upon it to protect them, often find it does but betray them. (2.) In times of distress, great riches are often great burthens, and do but increase the owner's care or the enemies' strength. Cantabit vacus coram latrone viator—The hungry less traveller will exult, when accosted by a robber, in having nothing about him.

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

CHAP. XVI.

This chapter continues and concludes the burthen of Moab. In it, I. The prophet gives good counsel to the Moabites, to reform what was amiss among them, and particularly to be kind to God's people, as the likeliest way to prevent the judgments before threatened, v. 1. 2. He promises them some manifold blessings, (they were so proud,) he goes on to foretell the lamentable devastation of their country, and the confusion they should be brought to, and this within three years, v. 6. 14.

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

God has made it to appear that he delights not in the ruin of sinners, by telling them what they may do to prevent the ruin; so he doth here to Moab. 1. He advises them to be just to the house of David, and to pay the tribute they had formerly consented to pay to the kings of his line; (v. 1.) Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land. David made the Moabites tributaries to him; (2 Sam. viii. 2;) they became his servants, and brought gifts. After wards they paid their tribute to the kings of Israel.
2 Kings iii. 4.) and paid it in lambs. Now the prophet requires them to pay it to Hezekiah. Let it be levied from all parts of the country, from Sela, a frontier city of Moab on the one side, to the wilderness, a boundary of the kingdom on the other side: and let it be sent, where it should be sent, to the mount of the daughter of Zion, the city of David. Some take it as an advice to send a lamb for a sacrifice to God the Ruler of the earth, (so it may be read,) the Lord the Ruler of the whole earth, Ruler, King of Moab as well as the land of Israel: "Send it to the temple built on mount Zion." And some think it is in this sense spoken ironically, upbraiding the Moabites with their folly in delaying to repent, and make their peace with God; "Now you would be glad to send a lamb to mount Zion, to make the God of Israel your Friend; but it is too late, the decree has brought forth, the consumption is determined, and the daughters of Moab shall be cast out as a wandering bird," v. 2. I rather take it as good advice seriously given, like that of Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar then when he was reading him his doom; (Dan. iv. 27.) Break off thy sins by righteousness, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity. And as it is applicable to the great gospel-duty of submission to Christ, as the Ruler of the lamb, so it is applicable to you. If you take the lamb, the best you have, yourselves a living sacrifice. When you come to God the great Ruler, come in the name of the Lamb, the Lamb of God. For else it shall be," (so we may read it, v. 2.) "that as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so shall the daughters of Moab be. If you will not pay your quit-rent, your last tribute to the king of Judah, you shall be turned out of your houses: the daughters of Moab (the country-villages, or the women of your country) shall flutter about the fords of Arnon, attempting that way to make their escape to some other land, like a wandering bird thrown out of the nest half-fledged." Those that will not submit to Christ, nor be gathered under the shadow of his wings, shall be as a bird that wanders from her nest, that shall either be snatched up by the next bird of prey, or shall wander endlessly in continual frights. Those that will not yield to the fear of God, shall be made to yield to the fear of every thing else.

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

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

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

3. He assures them of the mercy God had in store for his people. (1.) That they should not long need their kindness, or be troublesome to them, for the extortioner is almost at an end already, and the spoiler ceases. God's people shall not be long outcasts, they shall have tribulation ten days, (Rev. xi. 10.) and that is all. The spoiler would never cease spoiling, if he might have his will; but God has him in a chain. Hitherto he shall go, but no further. (2.) That they should, ere long, be in a capacity to return their kindness; (v. 5.) "Though the throne of the ten tribes be sunk and overturned, yet the throne of David shall be established in mercy, by the mercy they received from God, and the mercy they show to others; and by the same methods may your throne be established, and please." It would engage great men to be kind to the people of God, if they would but observe, as they easily might, how often that brings the blessing of God upon kingdoms and families. "Make Hezekiah your friend, for you will find it your interest to do so, upon the account both of the grace of God in him, and the presence of God with him. Make Hezekiah's kingdom shall indeed sit in honour, and sit fast. Then he shall sit judging, and will then be a protector to those that have been a shelter to the people of God." And see in him the character of a good magistrate. [1.] He shall seek judgment; he shall seek occasions of doing right to those that are wronged, and shall punish the injurers even before they are complained of: or, he that was brought before him, that he may find where the right lies. [2.] He shall instan righteousness, and not delay to do justice, nor keep those long waiting that make application to him for the redress of their grievances. Though he seeks judgment, and deliberates upon it, yet he does not, under pretence of that, stay the progress of the streams of justice. Let the Moabites take exam
6. We have heard of the pride of Moab; he is very proud; even of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath: but his lips shall not be so. 7. Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab, every one shall howl: for the foundations of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn; surely they are stricken. 8. For the fields of Heshbon languish, and the vine of Sibmah: the lords of the heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof, they are come even unto Jazer, they wandered through the wilderness; her branches are stretched out, they are gone over the sea: 9. Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh; for the shouting for thy summer-fruits, and for thy harvest, is fallen. 10. And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting; the treders shall tread out no wine in their presses; I have made their vintage-shouting to cease.

Wherefore my bowels shall sound like a harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kir-hareseth. 12. And it shall come to pass, when it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place, that he shall come to his sanctuary to pray; but he shall not prevail. 13. This is the word that the Lord hath spoken concerning Moab since that time. 14. But now the Lord hath spoken, saying, Within three years, as the years of a hirling, and the glory of Moab shall he be contemptu, with all that great multitude; and the remnant shall be very small and feeble.

Here we have,

1. The sins with which Moab is charged, v. 6. The prophet seems to check himself for going about to give good counsel to the Moabites, concluding they would not take the advice he gave them. He told them their duty, (whether they would hear, or whether they would forbear,) but desairs of working any good upon them; he would have healed them, but they would not be healed. They that will not be counselled, cannot be helped. Their sins were,

1. Pride: this is most insisted upon; for perhaps there are moreprecious souls rescued by God than any one lust whatever. The Moabites were notorious for this; We have heard of the pride of Moab; it is what all their neighbours cry out shame upon him; for he is very proud; the body of the nation is so, forgetting the baseness of their original, and the brand of infamy fastened upon them by that Law of God, which forbade a Moabit to enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever, Deut. xxiii. 3. We have heard of his haughtiness and his pride; it is not the rash and rigid censur of one or two concerning them, but it is the character which all that know them will give of them: they are a proud people; and therefore they will not take good counsel when it is given them, they think themselves too wise to be advised; therefore they will not take example by Hzeckiah to do justly and love mercy; they scorn to make him their pattern, for they think themselves able to teach him. They are proud, and therefore will not be subject to God himself, nor regard the things he gives. The wicked, in the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: they are proud, and therefore will not entertain and protect God’s outcasts, they scorn to have any thing to do with them: but this is not all, 2. We have heard of his wrath too, (for those that are very proud, are commonly very passionate,) particularly his wrath against the people of God, whom heende small power, ever than pounds, which he lies that he again, the gratifications of his pride and his passion; but his lips shall not be so, he shall not compass his proud and angry projects, as he hoped he should. Some read it, His haughtiness, his pride, and his wrath, are greater than his strength. We know that if we lay at his mercy, we should find no mercy with him, but he has not power equal to his malice, his pride draws down ruin upon him, for it is the preface to destruction, and he has not strength to ward it off.

II. The sorrows with which Moab is threatened; (v. 7.) Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab; all the inhabitants shall bitterly lament the ruin of their country, they shall complain one to another, every one shall howl in despair, and not one shall be saved, neither see any comfort, or have any heart, to encourage his friend. Observe,

1. The causes of this sorrow. (1.) The destruction of their cities; For the foundations of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn; that great and strong city, which had held out against a mighty force, (2 Kings iii. 15.) should now be levelled with the ground either burnt or broken down, and its foundations and the stones shall be as a audience, and the branches shall be as a cory; they shall howl when they see their splendid cities turned into ruinous heaps. (2.) The desolation of their country. Moab was famous for its fields and vineyards; but those shall all be laid waste by the invading army, (v. 8, 10.) See, [1.] What a fruitful, pleasant country they had, as the garden of the Lord, Gen. xiii. 19. It was planted with choice, noble vines, with principal plants, which reached even to Jazer, a city in the tribe of God; the luxuriant branches of their vines wandered, and wound themselves along the ranges on which they were spread, even through the wilderness of Moab, there were vineyards there; nay, they were stretched out, and went even to the sea, the Dead sea; the best grapes grew in their hedge-rows. [2.] How merry and pleasant they had been in it; many a time they had shouted for their summer-fruits, and for their harvest, as the country people sometimes do with us, when they have cut down all their corn. They had had joy and gladness in their fields and vineyards, singing and shouting at the treading of their grapes; nothing is said of their praising God for their abundance, and giving him the glory of it. If they had made it the fruit of the heathen, shall break down all the plants, though they were principal plants, the choicest that could be got. Now the shouting for the enjoyment of the summer-fruits is fallen, and is turned into howling for the loss of them; the joy of harvest is ceased, there is no more singing, no more shouting, for the treading out of wine: they have
not: what they have had to rejoice in, nor have they a disposition to rejoice, the ruin of their country has marred their mirth. Note, First, God can easily change the lot of a people that are most fortunate, even when they have been in prosperity, can soon turn their laughter into mourning, and their joy into heaviness. Secondly, Joy in God is, upon this account, far better than the joy of harvest, that it is what we cannot be robbed of, Ps. iv. 6, 7. Destroy the vines and the fig-trees, and you make all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease, Hos. ii. 11, 12. But a gracious soul can rejoice in the ruin of the God that is most adored, even when the fig-tree does not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine, Hab. iii. 17, 18. In God therefore let us always rejoice with a holy triumph, and in other things let us always rejoice with a holy trembling, rejoice as though we rejoiced not.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAP. XVII.

Syria and Ephraim were confederate against Judah, (ch. vii. 1, 2.) and they being so closely joined together in their counsels, this chapter, though it be entitled the burden of Damascus, (which was the head city of Syr-) reads the doom of Israel too. 1. The destruction of the strong cities both of Syria and Israel is here foretold, (v. 1-6.) or rather against the cities of Damascus, and against Moab, which were the kingdom of Syria, which are mentioned in this place, as belonging to the same dominion. 11. In the midst of the judgment mercy is remembered to Israel, and a gracious promise made that a remnant should be preserved from the calamities, and should get good by them, v. 6. 8. 11. The fulness of these threatenings of the judgment of Damascus is pointed at, v. 12. 14. In order of time, this chapter should be placed next after ch. ix. for the destruction of Damascus here foretold, happened in the reign of Ahaz, 2 Kings xvi. 9.

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

We have here the burden of Damascus; the
Chaldean Paraphrase reads it, *The barthen of the cup of the curse to drink to Damascus in;* and the ten tribes being in alliance, they must expect to pledge Damascus in this cup of trembling that is to go round.

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

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

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

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

(1.) It is wasted like a man in a consumption, v. 4.

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

(2.) It is all gathered and carried away by the Assyrian army, as the corn is carried out of the field by the husbandman. v. 5. The corn is the glory of the fields; (Ps. Ixxv. 13.) but when it is reaped and gone, where is the glory? The people had by their sins made themselves ripe for ruin, and their glory was as quickly, as easily, as justly, and as irresistibly, cut down and taken away, as the corn is out of the field by the husbandman. God's judgments are compared to the *threshing in of the sickle,* when the harvest is ripe, Rev. xiv. 15. And it is aptly compared to the victors of the husbandman, when he moves the harvest in the valley of Rephaim, where the corn was extraordinary, would not, if they could help it, leave an ear behind, would lose nothing that they could lay their hands on.

6. Yet grieving-grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive-tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the Lord God of Israel. 7. At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. 8. And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made, either the groves or the images. Mercy is here reserved in a parenthesis, in the midst of judgment, for a remnant that should escape the common ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes. Though the Assyrians took all the care they could, that none should slip out of their net, yet the neck of the earth were hid in the day of the Lord's anger, and had their lives given them for a prey, and made comfortable to them by their retirement to the land of Judah, where they had the liberty of God's courts.

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

2. They shall be a sanctified remnant; (v. 7, 8.) these few that are preserved, are such as, in the prospect of the judgment approaching, had repented of their sins, and reformed their lives, and therefore were snatched thus as brands out of the burning; or, such as, being escaped, and becoming refugees in strange countries, were awakened, partly by the name of the distinguishing mercy of their deliverance, and partly by the distresses they were still in, to return to God. (1.) They shall look up to their Creator, shall inquire, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night, in such a night of affliction as this? Job xxxv. 10, 11. They shall acknowledge his hand in all the events concerning them, merciful and afflictive, and shall submit to his hand; they shall give him the glory due to his name, and be suitably affected with his providences; they shall expect relief and succor from him, and depend upon him to help them; their eyes shall have respect to him, as the eyes of a servant to the home of his master, Ps. cxvii. 2. Observe, It is our dur
at all times to have respect to God, to have our eyes ever toward him, both as our Maker, the Author of our being, and the God of nature, and as the Holy One of Israel, a God in covenant with us, and the God of grace; particularly, when we are in affliction, our eyes must be toward the Lord, to shew our feet out of the net; (Ps. xxxv. 15.) to bring us this is the design of his providence, as he is our Maker and God, our refuge and strength, as he is the Holy One of Israel. (c.) They shall look off from their idols, the creatures of their own fancy, shall no longer worship them, and seek to them, and expect relief from them. For God will be alone regarded, or he does not look upon himself as at all regarded. He that looks to his Maker, must not look to the altar, the work of his hands, but disown them and cast them off; and not retain their worship for that which his fingers have made, but break it to pieces, though it were, his own workmanship, the groves and the images; the word signifies images made in honour of the sun, and by which he was worshipped, the most ancient and most plausible idolatry, Deut. iv. 19. Job xxxvi. 26. We have reason to account those happy afflictions, which part between us and our own sins, and sinning in the VANITY of the world, that great idol, cool our affections to it, and lower our expectations from it.

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

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

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

2. That the country should be laid waste, v. 10.

11. Observe here, (1.) The sin that had provoked God to bring so great a destruction upon that pleasant land; it was for the iniquity of them that dwelt therein: "It is because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and all the great salvation he has wrought for thee, hast forgotten thy dependence upon him and obligations to him, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength, not only who is himself a strong Rock, but has been thy Strength many a time, or thou hadst been sunk and broken. Look upon the Rock of our strength; and our forgetfulness and unmindfulness of him are at the bottom of all sin; therefore we have perverted our way, because we have forgotten the Lord our God, and so we undo ourselves. (2.) The destruction itself, aggravated by the great care they took to improve their land, and to make it yet more pleasant. (1.) Look upon it at the time of the secedness, and it was all a garden and a vineyard; that pleasant land was replenished with pleasant plants, the choicest of its own growth; nay, so nice and curios were the inhabitants, that, not content with them, they sent to all the neighbouring countries for strange slips, the more valuable for being strange, uncommon, far-fetched, and dear-bought, though perhaps they had their own a great deal more in their climate; the land was in instance of the whole globe and variety, (the great error) their affection to it to be like the nations. Wheat, and honey, and oil, were their staple commodities; (Ezek. xxvii. 17.) but not content with these, they must have flowers and greens with strange names imported from other nations, and a great deal of care and pains must be taken by hot-beds to make these plants to grow, the soil must be forced, and they must be covered with glasses to shelter them, and early in the morning the gardeners must be up to make the seed to flourish, that it may exceed those of their neighbours. The ornaments of nature are not to be altogether slighted, but it is a folly to be over-fond of them, and to bestow more time, and cost, and pains, about them than they deserve, as many do. But here this instance seems to be put in general for their great industry in cultivating their ground, and their expectations from it accordingly; they doubt not but their plants will grow and flourish. But, (2.) Look upon the same ground at the time of harvest, and it is all like a wilderness, a dismal melancholy place, even to the spectators, much more to the owners; for the harvest shall be a heap, all in confusion, in the day of grief and of desolate use. The battle was then with them, the harvest coming, and singing and shouting; (ch. xvi. 10.) but this harvest, the hungry eat up, (Job v. 5.) which makes it a day of grief, and the more, because the plants were pleasant and costly, (v. 10.) and their expectations proportionably raised. The harvest had sometimes been a day of grief, if the crop were thin, and the weather unseasonable; and yet in that case there was hope that the nation would be better; but this shall be separate sorrow, for they shall not only this year's products carried off, but the property of the ground altered, and their conquerors lords of it. The margin reads it, The harvest shall be removed, (into the enemy's country or camp, Deut. xxviii. 53.) in the day of inheritance, (when thou thoughtest to inherit it,) and there shall be no tillage nor gathering. This is a good idea, we should not lay up our treasure in the things which we may so quickly be despooled of, but in that good part which shall never be taken away from us.

12. Wo to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! 13. The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters; but God shall re-
buke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind. 14. And, he hold, at evening-tide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.

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

They are here brought in,

1. Triumphing over the people of God. They rely upon their numbers; the Assyrian army was made up out of divers nations, it is the multitude of many people, (v. 12.) by which weight they hope to carry the cause; they are very noisy, like the roaring of the seas; they talk big, hector and threaten, to frighten God's people from resisting them, and all their allies from sending in to their aid. Semachith and Rabshakeh, in their speeches and letters, made a mighty noise, to strike a terror upon Hezekiah and his people; the nations that followed them, made a rushing like the rushing of many waters, and those mighty ones, that threaten to bear down all before them, and carry away everything that stands in their way: the floods have lifted up their voice, have lifted up their waves; such is the tumult of the people, and the heathen, when they rage, Ps. ii. 1.—xiii. 3. They triumph upon the judgments of God. They think to carry their point by dint of noise; but wo to them, (v. 12.) for he shall rebuke them; God shall, one whom they little think of, have no regard to, stand in no awe of; he shall give them a check with an invisible hand, and then they shall flee afar off. Semachith and Rabshakeh, and the remains of their forces, shall run away in a fright, and shall be chased by their own terrors, as the chaff of the mountains which stand bleak before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind, like thistle-down; so the margin; they make themselves as chaff before the wind, (Ps. xxxv. 5.) and then the angel of the Lord, (as it follows there,) the same angel that slew many of them, shall chase the rest. God will make them like a snail, or rolling thing; and then persecute them with his tempest, and make them afraid with his storm, Ps. lxxxiii. 13.

15. Note, God can dispirit the enemies of his church when they are most courageous and confident, and dissipate them when they seem most closely consolidated. This shall be done suddenly; (v. 14.) At evening-tide they are very troublesome, and threaten trouble to the people of God; but then, when they are entering into their sleep, they are cast into a deep sleep, Ps. lxxxvi. 5, 6. It was in the night that the angel routed the Assyrian army. God can in a moment break the power of his church's enemies, then when it appears most formidable; and this is written for the encouragement of the people of God in all ages, when they find themselves in an unequal match for their enemies; for though in the portion of the that spoil us, they shall be assailed, God will plead his church's cause; and they that meddle, do it to their own hurt.

CHAP. XVIII.

Whatever country it is that is meant here by the land shadowing with wings, this is a wo denounced against it, for God has, upon his people's account, a quarrel with it. 1. They threaten God's people, v. 1. 2. All the neighbours are hereupon called to take notice what will be the issue, v. 3. III. Though God seem unconcerned in the distress of his people for a time, he will at length appear against their enemies, and will remarkably cut them off, v. 4—6. IV. This shall redound very much to the glory of God, v. 7.

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

Interpreters are very much at a loss where to find this land that lies beyond the rivers of Cush. Some take it to be Egypt or the south of it, and fallacious rivers, and which counted Israel to depend upon them, but proved broken reeds; but against this it is strongly objected, that the next chapter is distinguished from this by the title of the barren of Egypt. Others take it to be Ethiopia, and read it, which lies near, or about, the rivers of Ethiopia, not that in Africa, which lay in the south of Egypt, but that which we call Aethiopia, which lay by the coast of Canaan, which Tirhakah was now king of. He thought to protect the Jews, as it were, under the shadow of his wings, by giving a powerful diversion to the king of Assyria, when he made a descent upon his country, at the time that he was attacking Jerusalem, 2 Kings xix. 9. But, though by his ambassadors he bid defiance to the king of Assyria, and encouraged the Jews to stand upon him, God, by the hand of Canaan, which Tirhakah was now king of, thought to protect Jerusalem, while he suffers the attempt of Tirhakah to miscarry, and his Arabian army to be ruined; for the Assyrian shall become a present or sacrifice to the Lord of hosts, and to the place of his name, and to the place of Jacob's tents, and to the hand of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, v. 7. This is a very probable exposition of this chapter.

But from a hint of Dr. Lightfoot's in his Harmony of the Old Testament, I incline to understand this
chapter as a prophecy against Assyria; and so a continuation of the prophecy in the three last verses of the foregoing chapter, with which therefore this should be joined. That was against the army of the Assyrians, which rushed in upon Judah; this against the land of Assyria itself, which lay beyond the rivers of Arabia, the rivers of Euphrates and Tigris, which bordered on Arabia Deserta. And in calling it the land shadowing with wings, he seems to refer to what he himself had said of it, (ch. viii. 8.) that the stretching out of his wings shall fill thy land, O Immanuel. The prophet might perhaps describe the Assyrians as such dark expounders of the divine mysteries as St. Paul, in his prophecy, speaks of the Roman empire by a periphrasis, He who now letteth, 2 Thess. ii. 7.

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

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

III. The assurance God gives to his prophet, by him to be given to his people; though he might seem for a time to sit by as an unconcerned spectator, yet he would certainly and seasonably appear for the comfort of his people, and the confusion of his and their enemies, and the unction for his and their use, v. 4. When they have their saying, but God also will have his; and as we may be sure his word shall stand, so he often whispers it in the ears of his servants the prophets. When he says, "I will take my rest," it is not as if he were weary of governing the world, or as if he either needed or desired to retire from it, and repose himself; but 1. intimates 1. That the great God has a perfect, undisturbed, enjoyment of himself, in the midst of all the toils and changes of this world; the Lord is seven upon the flood unchanged; the Eternal Mind is always at rest. That sometimes he may seem to his people as if he took not wanted notice of what is done in this lower world; they are tempted to think he is as one asleep, or as one astonished; (Ps. xlv. 23. Jer. xiv. 9.) but even then he knows very well what men do, and what he himself will do.

(1.) He will take care of his people, and be a Shield to them; he will regard his dwelling-place, his eye and his heart are, and shall be, upon it for God continually. Zion is his rest for ever, where he will dwell; and he will look after it; some read it; he will lift up the light of his comeliness upon it, will consider over it what is to be done, and will be sure to do all for the best; he will adapt the comforts and refreshments he provides for them, to the exigencies of their case; and they will therefore be acceptable, because seasonable. [1.] Like a clear heat after rain, (so the margin,) which is very refreshing and pleasant, and makes the herbs to flourish. [2.] Like a dew and a cloud in the heat of harvest, which are very welcome, the dew to the ground, and the cloud to the labourers. Note, There is that in God, which is a shelter and refreshment to his people in all their troubles, and arms them against the inconveniences of every season. Is it not hot? Is it not cool? There is that in his favour, which will warm them. Is it hot? There is that in his favour, which will cool them. Great men have their winter-house and their summer-house; (Amos iii. 15.) but they that are at home with God, have both in him. (2.) He will reckon with his and their enemies, v. 5, 6. When the Assyrian army promises itself a plentiful harvest in the taking of Jerusalem, and the plundering of that rich city, when the end of that project is perfect, before the harvest is gathered in, while the sour grape of their comity to Hezekiah and his people is ripening in the flower, and the design is just ready to put in execution, God shall destroy that army as easily as the husbandman cuts off the sprigs of the vine with pruning-hooks, because the sour grape is sour and God for nothing, and will not be cured, takes away, and cuts down, the branches. This seems to point at the overthrow of the Assyrian army by a destroying angel; when the dead bodies of the soldiers were scattered like the branches and sprigs of a wild vine, which the husbandman has cut to pieces. And they shall be left to the fowls of the mountains, and the beasts of the earth, to prey upon, both winter and summer; for as God's people are protected all seasons of the year, both in cold and heat, (v. 4.) so their enemies are at all seasons exposed, birds and beasts of prey shall both summer and winter upon them, till they are quite ruined.

IV. The tribute of praise which should be brought to God from all this, v. 7. In that time, when this shall be accomplished, shall the present be brought into the Lord of hosts. 1. Some understand this of the conversion of the Ethiopians to the faith of Christ in the latter days; of which we have the specimen and beginning in Philip's baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts viii. 27. They that were a people scattered and peeled, meted out, and trodden down, (v. 2.) shall be a present to the Lord; and though they seem useless and worthless, they shall be found acceptable to him, accepted in the Beloved, by the sinlessness of their faith and love, not by the pomp and prosperity of their outward condition. Therefore the gospel was ministered to the Gentiles, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, Rom. xv. 16. It is prophesied (Ps
As Assyria was a breaking rod to Judah, with which it was sullen, so Egypt was a broken reed, with which it was cheated; and therefore God had a quarrel with them both. We have before read the doom of the Assyrians, now here we have the burden of Egypt, a prophecy concerning that nation; 1. That it should be greatly weakened and brought low, and should be as contemptible among the nations as now it was considerable, rendered so by a complication of judgments which God would bring upon them, v. 1-3. 2. That at length God's holy religion should be brought into Egypt, and set up there, in part by the Jews that should fly thither for refuge, but more fully by the preachers of the gospel of Christ, through whose ministry churches should be planted in Egypt in the days of the Messiah, (v. 18. 25.) which would abundantly balance all the calamities here threatened.

1. The burden of Egypt. Behold, the Lord rides upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt; and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards. And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts. And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up. And they shall turn the rivers far away, and the brooks of defence shall be emptied and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither. The paper-reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and every thing sown by the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and be no more. The fishes also shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the brooks, shall lament, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish. Moreover, they that work in fine flax, and weave net-works, shall be confounded. And they shall be broken in the purposes thereof, all that make sluices and ponds for fish. Surely the princes of Zoan are fools, the counsellors of the wise councillors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings? Where are they? where are thy wise men? and let them tell thee now, and let them know what the Lord of hosts hath purposèd upon Egypt. The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Noph are deceived; they have also seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof. The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof: and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit. Neither shall there be any work for Egypt, which the head or tail, branch or rush, may do. In that day shall Egypt be like unto women; and it shall be afraid and fear, because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts, which he shallketh over it. And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt; every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts, which he hath determined against it.

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

The gods of Egypt shall appear to them to be what they always really were, utterly unable to help them; (v. 1.) The Lord rides upon a cloud, a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt! as a judge goes in state to the bench to try and condemn the malefactors, or as a general takes the field with his troops to crush the rebels, so shall God come into Egypt with his judgments; and when he comes, he will certainly overcome. In all this burthen of Egypt he means the mention of any foreign army invading them; but God himself will come against them, and raise up the causes of their destruction from among themselves. He comes upon a cloud, above the reach of opposition or resistance. He comes in space, upon a swift cloud; for their judgment lingers not, when the time is come. He rides upon the wings of the wind, and far excelling the greatest pomp and splendour of earthly princes; he makes the clouds
his chariots, Ps. xvi. 9.—civ. 3. When he comes, the idols of Egypt shall be moved, shall be removed; a his presence, and perhaps may be made to fall, as Degen did before the ark. Isis, Osiris, and Apis, those celebrated idols of Egypt, being found unable to relieve their worshippers, shall be disowned and rejected by them. Idolatry had got deeper rooting in Egypt than it has here besides, even longer since; and yet now the idols shall be moved, and they shall be ashamed of them. When the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, he executed judgements upon the gods of the Egyptians; (Numb. xxxii. 4.) no marvel then if, when he comes, they begin to tremble. The Egyptians shall seek to the idols, when they are at their wits' end, and consult the charmers and wizards; (v. 3.) but all in vain; their chief sin lying hastening on them notwithstanding.

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

III. The Egyptians shall be embroiled in endless divisions and quarrels among themselves. There shall be no occasion to bring a foreign force upon them to destroy them, they shall destroy one another; (v. 2.) I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians. As these divisions and animosities are their sin, God is not the Author of them, they come from men's lusts; but God, as a Judge, permits them for their punishment, and by their destroying differences corrects them for their sinful agreements. Instead of helping one another, they shall profane each in his place for the common good, they shall fight every one against his brother and neighbour, whom he ought to love as himself; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. Egypt was then divided into twelve provinces, or dynasties; but Psammeticus, the governor of one of them, by setting them at variance with one another, at length made them fit. And this division against itself, soon would be brought to desolation. En quis discordia civis perducit miseram!—O the wretchedness brought upon a people by their disagreements among themselves! It is brought to this by a perverse spirit, a spirit of contradiction, which the Lord would mingle as an intoxicating draught made up of several ingredients, for the Egyptians; 14. If every master of them all—a hatred, thus divided against itself, would soon be brought to desolation. En quis discordia civis perducit miseram!

IV. Their politics shall be all blasted, and turned into foolishness; when God will destroy the nation, he will destroy the counsel thereof; (v. 3.) by taking away wisdom from the statesmen, (Jer. xx. 20.) setting them one against another, as Hushai and Ahithophel, or, by his providence, breaking their measures even then when they seemed well laid; so that the princes of Zoan are fools, they make foils of one another, every one betrays his own folly, and Divine Providence makes fools of them all, v. 11. Pharaoh had his wise counsellors, Egypt was famous for such; but their counsel is all become brutish, they have lost all their forecast, one would think they were become idiots, and were bereaved of a common sense. Let no man glory then in his own wisdom, or pride himself upon his counsels, for he knows not the wisdom of those about him; for he that gives understanding, can, when he pleases, take it away. And from them it is most likely to be taken away, that beast of their policy, as Pharaoh's counsellors here did, and, to recommend themselves to places of public trust, boast of their great understanding. "I am the son of the wise of the God of wisdom, of whom it is said, "There is one God, and one only, and by that one God himself is not named priest-counsellor of note, in his day, for wisdom;" or of the antiquity and dignity of their families; "I am" (says another) the son of ancient kings. The nobles of Egypt boasted much of their antiquity, producing fabulous records of their successions for above 16,000 years. This humour prevailed much among them about this time, as apparent from the singular title of the god Ammon, "who is the god of antiquity." Egypt was some thousands of years more ancient than any other nation. "But where are thy wise men?" (v. 12.) Let them now show their wisdom by foreseeing what ruin is coming upon their nation, and preventing it, if they can. Let them with all their skill know what the Lord of hosts has purposed upon Egypt, and arm themselves accordingly. Nor so far are they from doing this, that they themselves are, in effect, contriving the ruin of Egypt, and hastening it on. v. 13. The princes of Memphis are not only deceived themselves, but they have seduced Egypt, by putting their kings upon arbitrary proceedings; (by which both themselves and their people were soon undone;) the governors of Egypt, that are the stay and corner-stones of the tribes thereof, are themselves undermining it. It is sad with a people when those that undertake for their safety are helping forward their destruction, and the physicians of the state are their worst disease; when the things that belong to the public peace, are so far hid from the eyes of these that are entrusted with the public councils, that in every thing they blunder, and take wrong measures; so here, (v. 14.) They have caused Egypt to err in every way, and ever since they got the government; they have floated the ship of state, and every step of the ship is false step; they always mistake either the end or the means, and their counsels were all mistimed and uncertain, like the staggerings and stammerings of a drunken man in his vomit, who knows not what he says, nor where he goes. See what reason we have to pray for our worthy counsellors and ministers of state, who are the great supports and blessings of the state, if God give them a spirit of wisdom, but quite contrary, if he will give their heart from understanding.

V. The rod of government shall be turned into the serpent of tyranny and oppression; (v. 4.) "The Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; not a foreigner, but one of their own, one that shall rule over them by an hereditary right, but shall be a fierce king, and rule them with rigour." Either the twelve tyrants, or a posterior Psammeticus, that recovered the monarchy again; for he speaks of one cruel lord. Now the barbarous usage which the Egyptian taskmasters gave to God's Israel long ago, was remembered against them, and they were paid in their own coin by another Pharaoh. It is sad with a people when the powers that should be for edification are for their destruction, and they walk in their own way, as though they should be ruled, when such as this is the manner of the king; as it is described, in terrorum—in order to impress alarm. 1 Sam. viii. 11.
VI. Egypt was famous for its river Nile, which
was its wealth, and 1 strength, and beauty, and was
idolized by them. Now it is here threatened, that
the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall
be wasted and dried up, v. 5. Nature shall not
herein favour them as she has done. Egypt was
never watered with the rain of heaven, (Zech. xiv.
19.) and yet her fertility was not destroyed wholly upon the overflowing of their rivers;
it did therefore be dried up, their fruitful land will
so be turned into barrenness, and their harvests
cese: Everything seen by the brows will wither
of course, will be driven away, and be no more, v.
7. If the paper-reefs by the biows, at the very
mouth of them, wither, much more the corn, which
lies at a great distance from them, which is their
food. Yet this is not all; the drying up of
their rivers is the destruction, 1. Of their fortifica-
tions, for they are brooks of defence, (v. 6.) making
the country difficult of access to an enemy; deep
rivers are the strongest lines, and most hardly
forced. Pharaoh is said to be a great dragon lying
in the midst of his rivers, and guarded by them,
bidding defiance to all about him, Ezek. xxix. 8.
But these shall be emptied and dried up not by
an enemy, as Senacharib with the sole of his foot
dried up mighty rivers, (ch. xxxvii. 25.) and as Cy-
rus, who took Babylon by drawing Euphrates into
many streams, but by the providence of God, which
sometimes turns water-springs into dry ground.
Ps. cxviii. 5. 2. It is the destruction of their fish,
which is nothing when the children of this world
have made their rivers more heartyly lament, than the loss of that which they used to get money by:
Phavora lacrimas am-
issa pecunia veris—Those are genuine tears, which
are shed over lost money. (v. 2.) To keep fish, that
it may be ready when it is called for. There were
those that made stoves and ponds for fish, (v. 10.)
but they shall be broken in the purposes thereof;
their business shall fail, either from the river not
fill their stoves, or from want of fish to replenish
their waters. God can find ways to deprive a country
even of that which is its staple commodity. The
Egyptians may themselves remember the fish they
have formerly eaten freely, but now cannot have
for money. And that which aggravates the loss of
these advantages by the river, is, that it is its own
doings; (v. 6.) They shall turn the rivers for
their kings and great men, to gratify their own
fancy, will drain water from the main river to their
own houses and grounds at a distance, preferring
their private conveniences before the public, and
so by degrees the force of the river is sensibly weak-
ened. Thus may do themselves a greater prejudice
at last than they think of; [1.] Who pretend to be
wiser than nature, and to direct better for them-
selves than those have done. [2.] Who consult their
own particular interest more than the common
good. Such may gratify themselves, but surely
they can never satisfy themselves, who, to serve a
turn, contribute to a public calamity, which they
themselves, at long run, cannot avoid sharing in.
Here are hints tells us that Pharaoh-Necho, (who reigned
not long after this,) projecting an enterprise free
from business, made great noise in the Red sea;
employed a vast number of men to make a ditch or
canal for that purpose; in which attempt he im-
paired the river, lost a hundred and twenty thousand
of his people, and yet left the work unaccomplished.

VII. Egypt was famous for the linen manufac-
ture; but that trade shall be ruined. Solomon's
merchants traded with Egypt for linen yarn, 1
Kings vi. 28. Their country produced the best flax,
and the best hands to work it; but that which is
in fine flax, shall be confounded, (v. 9.) either it
will be wanting to work on, or for want of a demand
for that which they have worked upon. They are
likely, or of opportunity to export it. The decay of trade weakens and wastes a nation, and by degrees brings it to ruin.
The trade of Egypt must needs sink, for (v. 15.)
There shall not be any work for Egypt to be em-
ployed in; and when there is nothing to be done,
there is nothing to be got. There shall be an uni-
versal stop put to business, no work which either
head or tail can do. All business is likely for high or low, weak or strong, to do, no hire, Zech.
vi. 10. Note, The flourishing of a kingdom de-

deps much upon the industry of the people; and
then things are likely to do well, when all hands are
at work; when the head and trip branch do not dis-

dain to labour, and the labour of the tail and rush is
not disdained. But when the learned professions are
unemployed, the principal merchants have no stock,
and the handcraftsman nothing to do, poverty
comes upon a people as one that travelleth, and as
an armed man.

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

18. In that day shall five cities in the land
of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and
swear to the Lord of hosts: one shall be
called, The city of destruction. 19. In that
day there shall be an altar to the Lord in the
midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar
at the border thereof to the Lord. 20. And
it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto
the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt: for
they shall cry unto the Lord because of the
oppressors, and he shall send them a-
vion, and a great one, and he shall deliver them. 21. And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it. 22. And the Lord shall smite Egypt; he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them. 23. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. 24. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land; 25. Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.

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

Observe how the conversion of Egypt is here described.

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

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

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

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

V. Being in distress, they shall seek to God, and he shall be found of them; and this shall be a sign and a witness for the Lord of hosts, that he is a God hearing prayer to all flesh that come to him, v. 20. See Ps. lxxv. 2. When they cry to God by reason of their oppressors, the cruel lords that shall rule over them, (v. 4.) he shall be entreated of them;
(v. 22) whereas he had told his people Israel, who had made it their own choice to have such a king, that they should cry to him by reason of their king, and he would not hear them, I Sam. viii. 18.

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

Jesus Christ delivered the Gentiles from the service of dumb idols, and did himself both purchase and preach liberty to the captives.

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

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

1. All enmities shall be slain. Mortal feuds there have been between Egypt and Assyria, they often modern times; but now there shall be a highway between Egypt and Assyria. (v. 23.) a happy correspondence settled between the two nations; they shall trade with one another, and everything that passes between them shall be friendly. The Egyptians shall serve, shall worship, the true God with the Assyrians; and therefore the Assyrians shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptians into Assyria. Note, It becomes those, who have communion with the same God, through the same Mediator, to keep up an amicable correspondence with one another. The consideration of our meeting at the same throne of grace, and our serving each other in the same business of religion, should put an end to all heats and animosities, and knit our hearts to each other in holy love. 2. The Gentile nations shall not only unite with each other in the gospel-fold under Christ the great Shepherd, but they shall all be united with the Jews. When Egypt and Assyria become partners in serving God, Israel shall make a third with them, (v. 24.) they shall become a three-fold cord, not easily broken; the ceremonial law, which had long been the partition-wall between Jews and Gentiles, shall be taken down, and then they shall become one sheaf-fold, under one shepherd. Thus united, they shall be a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, v. 24. 25. (1.) Israel shall be a blessing to them all, because of the God whom they serve; (as concerning the flesh, Christ came; and they were the natural line of people upon which he was to tread.); and the Gentiles did originally impart its root and fitness, and the Gentiles were but graftfed in among them, Rom. xi. 17. Israel lay between Egypt and Assyria, and was a blessing to them, both by bringing them to meet in that word of the Lord, which went forth from Jerusalem, and that church which was first set up in the land of Israel: Qui conveniant in aliquo tertio, inter se conveniant—They who meet in a third, meet in each other. Israel is that third in whom Egypt and Assyria agree, and is therefore a blessing; for those are real and great blessings to their generation, who are instrumental to unite those that have been at variance. (2.) They shall all be a blessing to the world; so the Christian church is, upon its communion with those Gentile churches, to preserve the worship of God, and their relics, and support, of the world. (3.) They shall all be blessed of the Lord: [1.] They shall all be owned by him as his. Though Egypt was formerly a house of bondage to the people of God, and Assyria an unjust invader of them, all this shall now be forgiven and forgotten, and they shall be as welcome to God as Israel. They are all alike his people, whom he blesses and delivers; it is formed by him, for they are the work of his hands; not only as a people, but as his people. They are formed for him, for they are his inheritance, precious in his eyes, and dear to him, and from whom he has his rest of honour out of this lower world. [2.] They shall be owned together by him as jointly his; his in concert; they shall all share in one and the same blessings. Those that are united in the love and blessing of God, ought, for that reason, to be united to each other in charity.

CHAP. XX.

This chapter is a prediction of the carrying away of multitudes both of Egyptians and Egyptians, as captives by the king of Assyria. Here is, 1. The sign by which this was foretold, which was, the prophet's going, for some time, barefoot and almost naked, like a poor captive, v. 1, 2. II. The explication of that sign, v. 3, 4. III. The good use which the people of God should make of this, which is, never to trust in an arm of flesh, because, thus it will deceive them, v. 6.

1. In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him,) and fought against Ashdod, and took it; 2. At the same time spake the Lord by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go, and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. 3. And the Lord said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia; 4. So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives,
young and old, naked and barefoot, even with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. 5. And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory. 6. And the inhabitant of this isle shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation, whither we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria: and how shall we escape?

God here, as King of nations, brings a sore calamity upon Egypt and Ethiopia, but, as King of saints, brings a glory out of the ashes of their destruction.

I. The date of this prophecy; it was in the year that Ashdoth, a strong city of the Philistines, (but which some think was lately recovered from them by Hezekiah, when he smote the Philistines even unto Gaza, 2 Kings xviii. 8.) was besieged and taken by an army of the Assyrians; it is uncertain what year of Hezekiah that was, but the event was so remarkable, that they who lived then, could by that time remember the time to a year which we call a jubilee. The word Peulat, the name of the king of Assyria, is called Sargon, which some take to be the same with Semacharib; others think he was his immediate predecessor, and succeeded Shalmaneser. Tartan, who was general, or commander-in-chief, in this expedition, was one of Semacharib's officers, sent by him to bid defiance to Hezekiah, in concurrence with Rabshakeh, 2 Kings xviii. 17. It was in a Godly eye, that Hezekiah, seeing a barefoot man, dress, when he walked abroad. He had been a sign to his own people of the melancholy times that were come, and coming upon them, by the sackcloth which for some time he had worn, of which he had a gown made, which he girt about him. Some think he put himself into that habit of a mourner, upon occasion of the captivity of the ten tribes; others think sackcloth was what he commonly wore as a prophet, to show himself mortified to the world, and that he might learn to endure hardness; soft clothing better becomes those that attend in king's palaces, (Matth. xi.) than those that go on God's errands. Elijah wore hair-cloth, (2 Kings i.) and John Baptist, (Matth. iii.) and those that pretend to be prophets, supported their pretensions by wearing rough garments; (Zech. viii. 4.) but Isaiah bids him to have it, that he might show his sackcloth; from his loins, not to exchange it for better clothing, but for none at all, no upper garment, no mantle, cloak or coat, but only that which was next to him; his shirt, we may suppose, waistcoat, and drawers; and he must put off his shoes, and go barefoot; so that, compared with the dress of others, and what he himself usually wore, he might be said to go naked. This was a great hardship upon the prophet, it was a blemish to his reputation, and would expose him to contempt and ridicule; the boys in the streets would hust at him; and they who sought occasion against him, would say, The prophet is indeed a fool, and the spiritual man is mad, Hos. ix. 7. It might likewise be a prejudice to his health, he was in danger of catching a cold, which might threaten him with colds, and render him his life and estate. God bids he do him, that he might give a proof of his obedience to God in a most difficult command, and so shame the disobedience of his people to the most easy and reasonable precepts. When we are in the way of our duty, we must trust God both with our credit and with our safety. The hearts of that person are strangely stupid, and would not be affected, willing to venture upon a command which they have been taught by signs, and therefore Isaiah must do this for their edification: if the dress was scandalous, yet the design was glorious, and what a prophet of the Lord needed not to be ashamed of.

III. The exposition of this sign, v. 3, 4. It was intended to signify that the Egyptians and the Ethiopians should be led away captives by the king of Assyria, thus stripped, or in rags and very shabby clothing, as Isaiah was. God calls him his servant Isaiah, because in this matter particularly he had advanced him as a conspicuous sign; he was called naked and barefoot; there is some light in the event, provided he did so once, there was enough to give occasion to all about him to inquire what was the meaning of his doing so; or, as some think, he did it three days, a day for a year; and this for a three years' sign and wonder, for a sign of that which shall be done three years hence, or which shall be three years in the doing. Three campaigns successfully completed by the Assyrian army make, in appealing the Egyptians and Ethiopians, and carrying them away captive in this barbarous manner; not only the soldiers taken in the field of battle, but the inhabitants, young and old; and it being a very pitious sight, and such as must needs move compassion in those that had the least degree of tenderness left them, to see those who had gone all their days well-dressed, and who had covered themselves, to the recovery of their nakedness; that circumstance of their captivity is particularly taken notice of, and foretold, the more to affect them to whom this prophecy was delivered. It is particularly said to be the shame of Egypt, (v. 4.) because the Egyptians were a proud people, and therefore when they did fall into disgrace, it was the more shameful to them: and the higher they had lifted up themselves, so the lower was their fall, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of others.

IV. The use and application of this, v. 5, 6. 1. All that had any dependence upon, or correspondence with Egypt and Ethiopia, should now be ashamed of them, and afraid of having anything to do with them. Those countries that were in danger of being overthrown by the king of Assyria, that Tirshath, king of Ethiopia, with his numerous forces, should put a stop to the progress of their victorious arms, and be a barrier to his neighbours; and yet more assurance they gloried that Egypt, a kingdom so famous for policy and prudence, would do their business, would obliged them to raise the siege of Ashdoth, and retire with precipitation: but instead of this, by attempting to oppose them, they do but expose themselves, and make their country a prey to him. Hereupon, all about them are ashamed that ever they promised themselves any advantage from two such weak and cowardly nations, and more afraid now than ever they were of the growing greatness of the king of Assyria, before whom Egypt and Ethiopia proved but as bricers and thorns put to step a consuming fire, which he burns the more strongly. Note, Those who make any creature their expectation and glory, and so put it in the place of God, will, sooner or later, be ashamed of it, and their disappointment in it will but increase their fear. See Ezek. xxix. 6, 7.

2. The Jews in particular should be convinced of their folly in residing upon such broken reeds, and of the folly of any relief from them; (v. 6.) The inhabitants of this Isle, the land of Judah, situated upon the sea, though not surrounded by it; of this country, so the margin: every one shall have his eyes opened, and shall say, Behold, such is our expectation, so vain, so foolish, and this is that
which it will come to; we have fled for help to the Egyptians and Ethiopians, and have hoped by them to be delivered from the king of Assyria: but now they that are broken thus, how shall we escape, that are not able to bring such armies into the field as they did?" Note, (1.) Those that confide in creatures will be disappointed, and will be made ashamed of their confidence, for "in vain is the help of men, and in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, or the height and multitude of the mountains." (2.) Disappointment in creature-confidences, instead of driving us to despair, as here, (How shall we escape?) should drive us to God, to whom if we flee for help, our expectation shall not be frustrated.

CHAP. XXI.

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

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

We had one burden of Babylon before, (ch. 12.) here we have another prediction of its fall; God saw fit thus to possess his people with the belief of this event by line upon line; because Babylon sometimes pretended to be a friend to them, (as ch. xxxix. 1.) and God would hereby warn them not to trust to that friendship, and sometimes was really an enemy to them, and God would hereby warn them not to be afraid of that country. Babylon is marked for ruin; and all that believe God's prophets, can, through that glass, see it toting, see it tumbling, even then when with an eye of sense they see it flourishing, and sitting as a queen.

Babylon is the name of the sea, for it was a flat country, and full of lkes, or loughs, (as they call them in Ireland,) like little seas, and was abundantly watered with the many streams of the river Euphrates. Babylon did but lately begin to be famous, Nineveh having cutshined it while the monarchy was in the Assyrian hands; but in a little time it became the lady of kingdoms; and before it arrived at that pitch of empire which it was in Nebuchadnezzar's time, God, by this prophet, plainly foretold its fall, again and again, that his people might not be terrified at its rise, nor despair of relief in due time when they were its prisoners, Job. v. 3. Ps. xxxvii. 25, 36. Some think it is here called a desert, because, though it was now a populous city, it should in time become a desert, and therefore the destruction of Babylon is so often prophesied of by this evangelical prophet, because it was typical of the destruction of the man of sin, the great enemy of the New Testament church, which is foretold in the Revelation in many expressions borrowed from these prophecies, which therefore must be consulted and collated by those who would understand the prophecy of the book. Here is

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

II. The different impressions made hereby upon those concerned in Babylon. 1. To the poor oppressed captives it would be some news; for they had been too long ago that Babylon's desertion should be the more distressing; therefore when they hear that Elam and Media are coming up to besiege Babylon, all their sighing will be made to cease; they shall no longer mingle their
ears with Euphrates' streams, but resume their harps, and smile when they remember Zion, which, before, they wept at the thought of. For the sighing of the needy the God of pity will arise in due time; (Ps. xii. 5.) he will break the yoke from off their neck, will remove the rod of the wicked from off their lot, and set them up in safety. Because the counselor of oppressors it would be a grievous vision, (v. 2.) particularly to the king of Babylon for the time being, and it should seem that he it is who is here brought in, sadly lamenting his inevitable fate; (v. 3, 4.) Therefore are my loins filled with pain, pangs have taken hold upon me, &c. which was literally fulfilled in Belshazzar, for that very night in which the king was happy and himself sat in the sight of a hand writing mystic characters upon the wall, his countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees swooned one against another, Dan. v. 6. And yet that was but the beginning of sorrows; Daniel's decyphering of the writing could not but increase his terror, and the alarm which immediately followed, of the executioners at the door, would be the concluding of it. And those words, The night of my pleasure has he turned into fear to me, plainly refer to that aggravating circumstance of Belshazzar's fall, that he was slain on that night when he was in the height of his mirth and jollity, with his cups and concubines about him, and a thousand of his lords reveling with him; that night of his pleasure, when he promised himself an undisturbed, unlaughing enjoyment of the most exquisite gratifications of sense, with a particular defiance of God and religion in the profanation of the temple-vessels—that was the night that was turned into all this fear. Let this give an effectual check to vain mirth and sensual pleasures, and forbid us ever to lay the reins on the neck of them—that we know not what heaviness the mirth may end in, our laughter being turned into mourning; but this we know, that for all these things God shall bring us into judgment; let us therefore mix trembling always with our joys.

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

IV. A description of the alarm which should be given to Babylon, upon its being forced by Cyrus and Darius. The Lord, in vision, showed the prophet the watchman set in the watch-tower, near the palace, as is usual in times of danger; the king ordered those about him to post a sentinel in the most advantageous place for discovery, and according to the duty of a watchman, let him declare what he sees, v. 6. We read of a watchman thus set to receive intelligence, in the story of David, (2 Sam. xvii. 24.) and then he tells his sight to use. This watchman here discovered a chariot with a couple of horsemen attending it, in which we may suppose the commander-in-chief to ride; he then saw another chariot drawn by asses or mules, which were much in use among the Persians, and a chariot drawn by camels, which were likewise much in use among the Medes; so that (as Grotius thinks) these two groups of horsemen and two groups of chariots were either these chariots to bring tidings to the palace; compare Jer. i. 51, 32. One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end, while he is revelling at the other end, and knows nothing of the matter. This watchman, seeing these chariots at some distance, heartened diligently with much heed, to receive the first tidings. And (v. 8.) he cried, A lion; this word, coming out of a watchman's mouth, no doubt gave more of terror, and therefore it was the more likely he knew the meaning of it, though we do not know it now. It is likely that it was intended to raise attention; that he has an ear to hear, let him hear, as when a lion roars; or he cried as a lion, very loud and in good earnest; the occasion being very urgent. And what has he to say? 1. He professes his constancy to his post assigned him; “I stand, my lord,” and then gives a summary of what he has discovered, “I have discovered any thing material, till just now; I did seem safe and quiet.” Some make it to be a complaint of the people of God, that they had long expected the downfall of Babylon, according to the prophecy, and it was not yet come; but withal a resolution to continue waiting, as Hab. ii. 1. I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, to see what will be the issue of the present provings. 2. They give notice of the discovery they had made; (v. 9.) Here comes a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen; a vision representing the enemy’s entry into the city with all their force, or the tidings brought to the royal palace of it.

V. A certain account is at length given of the overthrow of Babylon. He in the chariot answered and said, (when he heard the watchman speak,) Babylon the glory of the kings of the Chaldees is come to an end; (v. 10.) or, as it is rendered, “Babylon, to the prophet inquiring concerning the issue of these affairs; “It is now come to this, Babylon is surely and irrecoverably fallen; Babylon’s business is done now. All the graven images of her gods she has broken unto the ground.” Babylon was the mother of harlots, of idolatry, which was one of the grounds of God’s quarrel with her; but her idols shall now be so far from protecting her, that some of them shall be broken down to the ground, and others of them, that were worth carrying away, shall go into captivity, and be a burthen to the beasts that carried them, ch. xlvii. 1, 2.

VI. Notice is given to the people of God, who were then captives in Babylon, that this prophecy of the downfall of Babylon was particularly intended for their comfort and encouragement, and they might depend upon the truth of that which was accomplished in due season, v. 10. Observe, 1. The title the prophet gives them in God’s name, O my threshing, and the corn of my floor; the prophet calls them his, because they were his countrymen, and such as he had a particular interest in and concern for; but he speaks it as from God, and directs his speech to those that were Israelites indeed, the faithful in the land. (1) The church is God’s floor, in which the most valuable fruits and products of this earth are, as it were, gathered together and laid up. (2.) True believers are the corn of God’s floor; by procurites are but as the chaff and straw, which take up a great deal of room, but are of small value, with which the wheat is now mixed, but from which it shall be shortly and for ever separated. (3.) The corn of God’s floor is in constant process of fashioning and persecutions. God’s Israel of old was afflicted from her youth, often under the plougher’s plough, (Ps. cxix.) and the threshers’ flail. (4.) Even then God owns it for his threshing, it is still; nay, the threshing of it is by his appointment, and under his restraint and direction. The threshers could have no power against it, but what is given them from above; and God did it for the sake of the truth of what he had delivered to them, which therefore they might build their hopes upon, That which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, that, and nothing else, that, and no
11. The burden of Dummah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? 12. The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquiere, inquire ye: return, come.

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

1. A question put by an Edomite to the watchman. Some one or other calls out of Seir, somebody that was more concerned for the public safety and welfare than the rest, who were generally careless and secure; as the man of Macedonia, in a vision, desired Paul to come over and help them, (Acts xvi. 9.) so this man of mount Seir, in a vision, desired the prophet to inform and instruct them. If it calls not many, it well there are any, that all are not alike unconcerned about the things that belong to the public peace. Some out of Seir ask advice of God's prophets, and are willing to be taught, when many of God's Israel heed nothing. The question is serious. What of the night? It is put to a proper person, the watchman, whose office it is to answer such inquiries: he repeats the question, as one in care, as one in earnest, and desires to have an answer. Note, (1.) God's prophets and ministers are appointed to be watchmen, and we are to look upon them as such. They are as watchmen in the city in a time of peace, to see that all be safe, to knock at every door by personal inquiries; ("Is it locked? Is the fire safe?".) to direct those that are at a loss, and check those that are disorderly, Gen. iii. 18. As watchmen in the camp in time of war; (Ezek. xxxiii. 7.) they are to take notice of the motions of the enemy, and to give notice of them, to make discoveries, and then give warning; and in this they must deny themselves. (2.) It is our duty to inquire of the watchmen, especially to ask again and again, What of the night? For watchmen wake when others sleep. [15] What time of the night? They are possessed of an unusual security, is it not time to rise, high time to awake out of sleep? Rom. xii. 11. We have a great deal of work to do, a long journey to go; is it not time to be stirring? "Watchman, what of o'clock is it? After a long dark night is there any hope of the day dawning?" [2.] What tidings of the night? What from the night? So some. "What vision has the prophet had to-night? We are ready to receive it." Or rather, "What occurs to-night? What weather is it? What news?" We must expect an alarm, and never be secure the day of the Lord, and the day of war; we must prepare to receive the alarm, and resolve to keep our ground, and then take the first hint of danger, and to our arms presently, to our spiritual weapons.

2. The watchman's answer to this question. The watchman was neither asleep nor dully; though it was a man of mount Seir that called to him, he was ready to give him an answer. He answers, (1.) By way of prediction; "none comes first a morning of light, and peace, and opportunity, you will enjoy one day of comfort more; but afterward comes a night of trouble and calamity." Note, In the course of God's providence, it is usual that morning and night are counter-changed, and succeed each other. Is it night with the morning, and the night be prepared, the storm, and others left misery. (2.) By way of exposition; If we will inquire, inquire ye. Note, It is our wisdom to improve the present morning in preparation for the night that is coming after it; "Inquire, return, come. Be inquisitive, be penitent, be willing and obedient." The manner of expression is very observable, but we are put to our choice what we will be. If we will inquire, inquire ye; if not, it is at your peril; you cannot say but you have a fair offer made you. We are also urged to be at a point; "If you will, say so, and do not stand pertaining; what you will do, do quickly, for it is no time to trifle." Those that return and come to God, will find they have a great deal of work to do, and a little time to do it in, and therefore they must have need to be busy.

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

Arabia was a large country, that lay eastward and southward of the land of Canaan; much of it is covered with mountains and precipices; it was called the land of the Dedanites. Of Dedan mentioned, (y. 13.) descended from Dedan, Abraham's son by Keturah; the inhabitants of Tema and Kedar descended from Ishmael, Gen.
xxv. 3, 13, 15. The Arabians generally lived in tents, and kept cattle, were a hardy people, inveterate in labour; probably the Jews depended upon them as a sort of a wall between them and the more warlike eastern nations; and therefore, to alarm them, they shall hear the burden of Arabia, and see it sinking under the sword of the Assyrian. We may here observe, that destroying army shall be brought upon them, with a sword, with a drawn sword, with a bow ready bent, and with all the grievousness of war. It is probable that the king of Assyria, in some of the marches of his formidable and victorious army, took Arabia in his way, and meeting with little resistance, made an easy prey of them. The consideration of the grievances of war should make us thankful for the blessings of peace.

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

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

4. All that which is the glory of Kedar shall vanish away and fail. Did they glory in their numerous herds and flocks? They shall all be driven away by the enemy. It seems, they were famous above other nations for the use of the bow in battle; but their archers, instead of pulling the enemy, shall fall themselves; and the residue of their number, when they are reduced to a small number, shall be diminished; (v. 17.) their mighty, able-bodied men, and men of spirit too, shall become very few; for they being most forward in the defence of their country, were most exposed, and fell first, either by the grievous sword, or way to the enemy's hand. Note, Neither the skill of archers, (though they be ever so good marksmen,) nor the courage of mighty men, can protect a people from the judgments of God, when they come with commission; they rather expose the understanders. That is poor glory, which will thus quickly come to nothing.

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

The Lord God of Israel hath spoken it; as the God of Israel, in pursuance of his gracious designs concerning them; and we may be sure the Strength of Israel will not lie.

CHAP. XXII.

We are now come nearer home, for this chapter is the burden of the valley of vision, Jerusalem; other places had their burden for the sake of their being concerned some way or other with Jerusalem, and were reckoned with either as spoilful enemies, or deceitful friends, to the people of God; but now let Jerusalem hear her doom. This chapter concerns, 1. The city of Jerusalem, (v. 1.) the city of the Lord, and the habitation of the Lord, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. 2. Adversaries, (v. 12.) which consider, 1. A prophecy of the grievous distress they should shortly be brought into, by Sennacherib's invasion of the country, and laying siege to the city, v. 1. 7. 2. A proof given them for their misconduct in that distress, in two things, (1.) Not having an eye to God in the use of the means of their preservation, v. 8. 11. (2.) Not humbling themselves under his mighty hand, v. 12. 14. 17. The city of Hezekiah, and the officers of that court. 1. The displacing of Shebna, a bad man, and turning him out of the treasury, v. 15. 19. 25. 2. The preferring of Eliakim to his place, who should do his country better service, v. 30. 24.

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

The title of this prophecy is very observable: It is the burden of the valley of vision, of Judah and
Jerusalem; all so agree. 57. enough is Jerusalem called a valley; for the mountains were round about it; and the land of Judah abounded with fruitful valleys. And by the judgments of God, though they had been as a towering mountain, they should be brought low, sunk and depressed, and become dark and dirty valleys. But most emphatically it is called a valley of vision, because there God was known, and his name great; there the prophets were made acquainted with his mind by visions, and there the people saw the goings of their God and King in his sanctuary. Babylon, being a stranger to God, though rich and great, was called the desert of the sea, but Jerusalem, being acquainted with his oracles, is a valley of visions; blessed are their eyes, for they see, and they have seers by office among them. Where Bibles and ministers are, there is a valley of vision, from which is expected fruit accordingly; but here is a burchen of the valley of vision, and a heavy burchen it is. Note, Church-privileges, if they be not improved, will not secure men from the judgments of God; You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you. The valley of vision has a particular burthen; Thou Capernaum, Matt. xi. 23. The higher any are lifted up in means and mercies, the heavier will their doom be if they abuse them.

Now the burchen of the valley of vision here, is that which will not quite ruin it, but frighten it; for it was a populous and prosperous city, and here is shown its destruction. It is built upon its own foundation, and with its own materials; it is built upon the house-top, and it shall be thronged, so that they could not draw a bow. See how easily God can dispossess men, and how certainly fear will do it, when the tyranny of it is yielded to.

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

The distress and destruction of Jerusalem, because of the strength of the enemy, that should invade their country and besiege their city, v. 6, 7. Elam, the Persians, come with their quiver full of arrows, and with chariots of fighting men, and horsemen; Kir, the Medes, muster up their arms, unsheathe the sword, and uncover the shield, and get every thing ready for battle, every thing ready for the besieging of Jerusalem; then the valley of vision, the city, with their battering-rams are breaking down the walls, and the city the horsemen shall set themselves in array, to cut off all provisions from going in, and to force their way in. What a condition must the city be in, that was beset on all sides with such an army?

3. And he discovered the covering of Judah, and thou didst look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest. 9. We have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many; and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool: 10. And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall. 11. Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool; but ye have not looked unto the maker thereof, neither had respect unto
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12. And in that day did the Lord of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: 13. And, behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. 14. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord of hosts.

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

I. A great contempt of God's goodness, and his power to help them. They made use of the means they could think of for their own preservation; and it is not that they are blamed for, but, in doing this, they did not acknowledge God. Observe, 1. How carefully they were to improve all advantages that might contribute to their safety. When Sennacherib had made himself master of all the fenced cities of Judah, and Jerusalem was left as a cottage in a vineyard, they thought it was time to look about them; a council was immediately called, a council of war; and it was resolved to stand upon their defence, and not tamely to surrender. Pursuant to this resolve, they took all the prudent measures they could for their own security. We tempt God, if, in times of danger, we do not the best we can for ourselves. 1. They inspected the magazines and stores, to see if they were well stocked with arms and ammunition. They looked to the armour of the house of the forest, which Solomon built in Jerusalem for an armoury, (1 Kings x. 17.) and thence they delivered out what they had occasion for. 2. It is the wisdom of princes, in time of peace, to provide for times of war, and to keep them always in good repair for such a case, so as to be able to come to the assistance of the city when they should use them, and perhaps upon a sudden emergency. (2.) They viewed the fortifications, the breaches of the city of David; they walked round the walls, and observed where they were gone to decay, for want of seasonable repairs, or broken by some former attempts made upon them. Those breaches were many; the more shame for the house of David, that they suffered the city of David to lie neglected. They had, probably, often seen these breaches; but now they saw them to consider what course to take about them. This good we should get by public distresses, we should be awakened by them to repair our breaches, and amend what is amiss. 3. They made sure of water for the city, and did what they could to deprive the besiegers of it; Ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool, of which there was, probably, no great store, and of which, therefore, they could be the more secure. The waters of the old pool be good harsb. See what a mercy it is, that, as nothing is more necessary to the support of human life than water, so nothing is more cheap and common; but it is had indeed when that, as here, is a scarce commodity. (3.) They numbered the houses of Jerusalem, that every house might send in their quotas of men for the public service, or contribute in money to it; which perhaps was by a girding with sackcloth. (5.) Because private property ought to give way to the public safety, those houses that stood in their way, when the wall was to be fortified, were broken down; which, in such a case of necessity, is no more an injury to the owner, than blowing up houses in case of fire. (6.) They made a ditch between the outer and inner wall, for the greater security of the city; and they contrived to draw the water of the old pool to it, that they might have plenty of water themselves, and might deprive the besiegers of it: for, it seems, that was the project, lest the Assyrian army should come and find much water, (2 Chron. xxxiii. 4.) and so should be the better able to prolong the siege. If it be lawful to destroy the herbage of a country, much more to put an end to the streams of its waters, for the straitening and starving of an enemy.

2. How regardless they were of God in all these preparations; but we have not looked unto the Maker thereof; of Jerusalem, (the city you are so solicitous for the defence of,) and of all the advantages which nature has furnished it with for its defence; the mountains round about it, (Ps. cxxy. 2.) and the rivers, which were such as the inhabitants might turn to an advantage of their own convenience. Note, (1.) It is God that made his Jerusalem, and fashioned it long ago, in his counsels. The Jewish writers, upon this place, say, There were seven things which God made before the world; meaning which he had in his eye when he made the world, the garden of Eden, the law, the just ones, Israel, the throne of glory, Jerusalem, and Messiah the saviour. The gospel-church has God for its Maker. (2.) Whatever service we do, or endeavour to do, at any time, for God's Jerusalem, it must be with an eye to him as the Maker of it; and he takes it ill if we do not. It is charged upon them here, that they did not look to God. [1.] They did not design his glory, in what they did. They fortified Jerusalem because it was a rich city, and their own houses were in it; because it was the holy city, and God's house was in it. In all our cares for the defence of the church, we must look more at God's interest in it than at our own. [2.] They did not depend upon him for a blessing upon their endeavours, saw no need of it, and therefore sought not to him for it, but thought their own powers and policies sufficient for them. Of Hezekiah himself it is said, He trusted in his own house, (2 Chron. xxxii. 29.) he trusted particularly upon this occasion; (2 Chron. xxxiii. 8.) but there were these about him, it seems, who were great statesmen and soldiers, but had little religion in them. [3.] They did not give him thanks for the advantages they had in fortifying their city from the waters of the old pool, which were fashioned long ago, as Kishen is called an ancient river, John xlv. 1. Whatever we receive in service to us, we must therein acknowledge the goodness of the God of nature; who, when he fashioned it long ago, fitted it to be so, and according to whose ordinance it continues to this day. Every creature is that to us that God makes it to be; and therefore, whatever use it is to us, we must look at him that fashioned it, bless him for it, and use it for him.
II. A great contempt of God's wrath and justice in contending with them, v. 12-14. Where observe,
1. What was God's design in bringing this calamity upon them; it was to humble them, bring them to repentance, and make them serious. In that day of trouble, and treading down, and perplexity, the Lord did thereby call to weeping, and mourning, and supplication, and a profession of dependence on him, to work for them, and girding with sackcloth; and all this, to lament their sins, by which they had brought those judgments upon their land, to enforce their prayers, by which they might hope to avert the judgments that were breaking in, and to dispose themselves to a reformation of their lives by a holy seriousness, and a tenderness of heart, under the work of God. To this God called them by his prophets' explaining his providences, and by his providences awakening them to regard what his prophets said. Note, When God threatens us with his judgments, he expects and requires that we humble ourselves under his mighty hand; that we tremble when the lion rears, and in a day of adversity consider.
2. To the contrary they walked to this design of God; (v. 13.) Behold, joy and gladness, mirth and feasting, all the gaiety and all the jollity imaginable; they were as secure and pleasant as they used to be, as if they had no enemy in their borders, or were in no danger of falling into his hands. When they had taken the necessary precautions for their security, then they set all deaths and dangers at defiance, and would walk as if there were no such thing, and could contain what they should have been eating among the mourners, were among the winebibbers, the riotous eaters of flesh; and observe what they said, Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. This may refer either to the particular danger they were now in, and the fair warning which the prophet gave them of it, or to the general shortness and uncertainty of human life, and the nearness of death at all times. This was the language of the profane scoffers who mocked the messengers of the Lord, and misused his prophets. (1.) They made a jest of dying; "The prophet tells us we must die shortly, perhaps to-morrow, and therefore we should mourn and repent to-day; no, rather let us eat and drink, that we may be fattened now for the slaughter."
(2.) They ridiculed the doctrine of a future state on the other side death; for if there were no such state, the apostle grants there would be something of reason in what they said, 1 Cor. xv. 32. If, when we die, there were an end of us, it were good to make ourselves as easy and merry as we could, while we live; but if for all these things God shall bring us into judgment, it is at our peril if we walk in the way of our heart and the sight of our eyes, Eccl. xi. 9. Note, A practical disbelief of another life after this, is at the bottom of the carnal sensuality and brutish sensuality, which are the sin and shame and ruin of so great a part of mankind, as of the old world, wolves in sheep's clothing; and so it is with the world in general. The iniquity of Shebna, v. 15. Thus saith the Lord God of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasure, even unto Shebna, which is over the house, and say, 16. What hast thou here, and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, as he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, and that gaveth a habitation for himself in a rock! 17. Behold, the Lord will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee. 18. He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country; there shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord's house. 19. And I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state shall be pull thee down. 20. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah:
21. And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah.
22. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder: so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. 23. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. 24. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house; the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons. 25. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the Lord hath spoken it. We have here a prophecy concerning the displacing of Shebna, a great officer at court, and the placing of Eliakim to the post of honour and trust that he was in. Such changes are common in the courts of princes, it is therefore strange that so much notice should be taken of it by the prophet here; but by the accomplishment of what was foretold concerning these particular persons, God designed to confirm his word in the mouth of Isaiah concerning other and greater events; and it is likewise to show, 26. As God has burdens in the store for those trust and kingdoms abroad that are open enemies to his church and people; so he has for these particular persons at home, that are false friends to them, and betray them. It is likewise a confirmation in general of the hand of Divine Providence in all events of this kind, which to us seem contingent, and to depend upon the wills and fancies of princes; God comes neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the Judge, Ps. lxvi. 6, 7. It is probable that this prophecy was delivered at the same time with that in the former part of the chapter, and began to be fulfilled before
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S. menachem's invasion, for now Shebna was over the house, but then Eliakim was,(ch.xxxvi.5.) and Sheb-

na coming down gradually, was only a scribe. Here is,

1. The prophecy of Shebna's disgrace; he is call-
ed this treasurer, being intrusted with the manage-

ment of the revenue; and he is likewise said to be

over the house; for such was his boundless ambition
and covetousness, that he sought to be a king's

importance at court, would not content him. It is common for self-seeking men to grasp at more than they can manage; and so the business of their places is neglected, while the pomp and profit of them wholly engage the mind. It does not appear what were the particular instances of Shebna's mal-administration, for which Isaiah is herefore prophesy against him; but he saith, "He knew not to deal with his own

wealth, and to be content with his station."

2. A reproach of his pride, vanity, and security; (v. 15.) "What hast thou here, and whom hast thou here?" What a mighty noise and bustle dost thou make! What estate hast thou here, that thou wast born to? Whom hast thou here, what relations that thou art allied to? Art thou not of mean and obscure original, filiusServus—Serbilechian, that comest we know not whence? What is the meaning of this then, that thou hast built thee a fine house, but grazed thee a habitation?" So very nice and curious was it, that it seemed rather to be the work of an engraver than of a miser or carpenter. And it seemed even in a rock: so firmly was it founded, and so improbable it was. "Nay, thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre;" as if he designed that his pomp should survive his family less than two places, and was more like a th delivered of his fathers' sepulchres, (as Nehemiah called it with a great deal of tenderness, Neh. ii. 3.) he designed it should be the place of his own; and therefore set up a monument for himself in his lifetime, set it up on high. They that make stately monuments for their pride, forget that, how beautiful soever they appear outwardly, within they are full of dead men's bones: but it is pity that the greater they are made, the more they are the object of upbraid: and as Shebna was a type of the last great prophesy, so may we there, and his fall becomes the subject of this prophecy.

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

(1.) That he should now quickly be displaced and deposed; (v. 19.) "I will drive thee from thy station. High places are slippery places; and those are justly deprived of their honour, that are proud of it, and puffed up with it; and deprived of their power, and thereby settled. God will do it who shows himself to be God, by looking upon proud men, and abusing them, Job xl. 12. To this, v. 23, refers. The mill that is now fastened in the sure place, Shebna, where himself is immovably fixed in his office, shall be removed, and cut down, and fall. These are mistaken, who think any place in this world a sure place, or themselves as nails fastened in it; for there is nothing here but uncertainty. When the rain falls, the butter that was upon it is cut off: when Shebna was disgraced, all that had a dependence upon him fell into contempt too. These that are in high places will have many hanging upon them, as favourites whom they are proud of and trust to; but they are burdens upon them, and perhaps with their weight break the nail, and both fall together, and by deceiving ruin one another—the common fate of great men and their flatterers, who expect more from each other than they perform.

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

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

It is here foretold,

1. That Eliakim should be put into Shebna's place of lord chamberlain of the household, lord treasurer, and prime minister of state. The prophet must tell Shebna this; (v. 21.) "He shall have the robe, the bridge of the king's hand, the budge of power; for he shall have thy government." To hear of it would be a great mortification to Shebna, much more to see it. Great men, especially if proud men, cannot endure their successors. God undertakes the doing of it, not only because he would put it into the heart of Hezekiah to do it, and his hand must be acknowledged, guiding the hearts of princes, but also that he may make an example against him, nor does he intrude into his office; but God calls him to it; and what God calls us to, we may expect he will own us in.

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1. That Eliakim should be put into Shebna's place of lord chamberlain of the household, lord treasurer, and prime minister of state. The prophet must tell Shebna this; (v. 21.) "He shall have the robe, the bridge of the king's hand, the budge of power; for he shall have thy government." To hear of it would be a great mortification to Shebna, much more to see it. Great men, especially if proud men, cannot endure their successors. God undertakes the doing of it, not only because he would put it into the heart of Hezekiah to do it, and his hand must be acknowledged, guiding the hearts of princes, but also that he may make an example against him, nor does he intrude into his office; but God calls him to it; and what God calls us to, we may expect he will own us in.
what he calls them: according to the promise here, I will clothe him; and then it follows, I will strengthen him. These are called to places of trust and power, should seek unto God for grace to enable them to do the duty of their places, for that was to be their chief care.

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

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

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

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

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

Eliakim being preferred, all the glory of his father's house was hung upon him; they all made their court to him, and his brethren's sheaves bowed to his. Observe, the glory of this world gives a man more external worth and excellency; it is but hung upon him as an appendance, and it will soon drop from him. Eliakim was compared to a nail in a sure place; in pursuance of which comparison, all the relations of his family, which, it is likely, were numerous, and that was the glory of it, are said to have a dependence upon him; as in a house the vessels that have handles to them are hung up upon nails and pins. It intimates likewise, that he shall generously take care of them all, and bear the weight of that care, all the vessels, not only the smaller, but the cups, the vessels of small quantity, the meanest that belonged to the family, shall be provided for by him; being a true public servant, bring upon themselves, undertake great trusts; they little think how many and how much will hang upon them, if they resolve to be faithful in the discharge of their trust. Our Lord Jesus having the key of the house of David, is as a nail in a sure place, and all the glory of his father's house hangs upon him, is derived from him, and depends upon him, as the meanest that belong to his church, are welcome to him, and he is able to bear the stress of them all. That nail cannot perish, nor that concern fail to the ground, though ever so weighty, that is by faith hung upon Christ.

CHAP. XXIII.

This chapter is concerning Tyre, an ancient wealthy city, situated for many ages one of the most celebrated cities for trade and merchandise in those parts of the world. The lot of the tribe of Asher bordered upon it; (Joshua xix. 29.) it is called the strong city Tyre.

We seldom speak of the relations of great cities to great persons, but sometimes their faithful ally, as in the reigns of David and Solomon; for trading cities maintain their grandeur, not by conquests of their neighbours, but by commerce with them. In this chapter is foretold, I. The lamentable desolation of Tyre, which was performed by Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldean army, about the time that they destroyed Jerusalem; and a hard task they had of it, as appears, Ezek. xxix. 13, where they are said to have served a hard service against Tyre, and yet to have no wages, v. 1-14. II. The restoration of Tyre after 70 years, and the return of the Tyrians out of their captivity to their trade again, v. 15-18.

1. The burden of Tyre. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in: from the land of Chittim it is revealed to them.

2. Be still, ye inhabitants of the isles; thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished. 3. And by great waters the seed of Shior, the harvest of the river, is her revenue; and she is a mart of nations. 4. Be thou ashamed, O Zidon; for the sea hath spoken, even the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, nor bring up virgins. 5. As at the report concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre. 6. Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle. 7. Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn. 8. Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth? 9. The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth. 10. Pass through thy land as a river. O daughter of Tarshish
there is no more strength. 11. He stretched out his hand over the sea; he shook the kingdoms: the Lord hath given a commandment against the merchant-city, to destroy the strong holds thereof. 12. And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zion; arise, pass over to Chittim; there also shalt thou have no rest. 13. Behold, the land of the Chaldeans: this people was not till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof; and he brought it to ruin. 14. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for your strength is laid waste.

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

1. Tyre flourishing. This is taken notice of, that hereupon he appears the more dismal; 1. The merchants of Zidon, the traffickers, and all her merchants, have replenished her, v. 2. Zidon was the more ancient city, situated upon the same sea-coast, a few leagues more to the north, and Tyre was at first only a colony of that; but the daughter had outgrown the mother, and was become much more considerable. It may be a mortification to great cities to think how they were at first replenished. 2. Egypt had helped very much to raise her, v. 3. She was the river of Egypt, by that river, and the ocean into which it ran, the Egyptians traded with Tyre: and the harvest of that river was her revenue. The riches of the sea, and the gains by goods exported and imported, are as much the harvest to trading towns, as that of hay and corn is to the country; and sometimes the harvest of the river proves a better revenue than the harvest of the land. Or, it may be meant of all the products of the Egyptian soil, which the men of Tyre traded in, and which were the harvest of the river Nile, owing themselves to the overflowing of that river. 3. She was become the mart of the nations; the great emporium of that part of the world. Some of every known nation might be found there, especially at certain times of the year, when there was a general rendezvous of merchants. This is enlarged upon by another prophet, Ezek. xxxvii. 2, 3, &c. See how the hand of the diligent, by the blessing of God upon it, makes rich. Tyre became rich and great by industry, though she had no other ploughs going than those that plough the waters. 4. She was a joyous city, noted for mirth and jollity, v. 7. Those that were so disposed, might find there all manner of sports and pastimes, even those delights so dear to men and numbers of men; balls, and plays, and operas, and every thing of that kind, that a man had a fancy to. This made them secure and proud, and they despised the country people, who neither knew nor relished any joys of that nature: and this made them very loath to believe and consider what warnings God gave them by his servants; they were too merry to mind them. 5. She was a crowning city, (v. 8.) that crowned herself. Such were the power and pomp of her magistrates, that they crowned those who had dependence on her, and dealings with her. It is explained in the following words, Her merchant princes are princes, and her wise men her rulers, the case and state they take, and the conduct they have. Wherever country they go to, are the honourable of the earth, who are respected by all. How slightly soever some now speak of tradesmen, it seems, formerly, and among the wisest nations, there were merchants, and traders, and men of business, that were the honourable of the earth.

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

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

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

3. The neighbours are amazed, blush, and are in pain for them; Zidon is ashamed, (v. 4.) by whom Tyre was at first replenished, for the rolling waves of the sea brought to Zidon this news from Tyre; and there the strength of the sea, a high spring-tide, proclaimed, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, now as I have done. I do not now bring to market the bread of men, the fatness of the land, or the wine, or the oil, or the corn, or the meat, or the meat of the flocks, or the fatness of the goats and of the sheep, or the milk of the goats, or the increase of the herd, or the young of the fowl, or the fish of the sea, (v. 5.) it is clear that the trade of Tyre was so rich and populous. Or, the sea, that used to be loaded with fleets of ships about Tyre, shall now be as desolate as a sorrowful widow that is bereaved of all her children, and has none about her to nourish and bring up. Egypt indeed was a much larger and more considerable country; she had a very considerable trade, but the Tyrians had so large a correspondence, upon the account of trade, that all the nations about shall be as much in pain, upon the report of the ruin of that one city, as they would have been, and not long after, were, upon the report of the ruin of all Egypt, v. 5. Or, as some read it, When the report shall reach to the Egyptians, they shall be sorely pained to hear it of Tyre; both because of the loss of their trade with
that city, and because it was a threatening step toward their own ruin, when their neighbour's house was in the smoke of fire, in the midst of danger.

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

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

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

But whence shall all this trouble come?

(1.) God will be the Author of it; it is a destruction from the Almighty. It will be asked, (v. 8.) Who has taken this counsel against Tyre? Who is the cause of it? To whom shall we give the blame? My answer is, It is the Lord of hosts, that has all things at his disposal, and gives not accounts contrary to what he has resolved it. Who can be done according to the counsel of his will; and that which he aims at herein, is, to stain the pride of all glory, to pollute it, profane it, and throw it to be trodden upon; and to bring into contempt, and make despicable, all the honourable ones of the earth, that they may not admire themselves, and be admired by others, as usual. God did not bring those calamities upon Tyre in a way of sovereignty, to show an arbitrary and irresistible power; but he did it to punish the Tyrians for their pride. Many other sins, no doubt, reigned among them; idolatry, sensuality, and oppression; but the sin of pride is fastened upon, on that which was trusted and put in danger.

(2.) Of God's controversy with Tyre, for he resists the proud. All the world observing, and being surprised at, the desolation of Tyre, we have here an exposition of it. God tells the world what he meant by it: First, He designed to convince men of the vanity and uncertainty of all earthly glory; to show them what a withering, fading, perishing thing it is, given to the children of men to be as the grass of the field, which is raised to such a height, that men will believe they are well if men would be thoroughly taught this lesson, though it were at the expense of so great a destruction. Are men's learning and wealth, their pomp and power, their interest in, and influence upon, all about them, their glory? Are their stately houses, rich furniture, and splendid appearances, their glory? Look upon the ruins of Tyre, and see all this glory stagned, and suffocated, and buried in the dust. The honourable ones of heaven will be for ever such; but see the grandees of Tyre, some fled into banishment, others forced into captivity, and all impoverished; and you will conclude that the honourable of the earth, even the most honourable, know not how soon they may be brought into contempt. Secondly, He designed hereby to prevent the enemies of his people being exalted and lifted up, and confident of the continuance of it. Let the ruin of Tyre be a warning to all places and persons to take heed of pride, for it proclaims to all the world, that he who exalts himself shall be abased.

(2.) God will do it, who has all power in his hand, and can do it effectually; (v. 11.) He stretched out his hand over the sea; he has done it, witnessed the dividing of the Red sea, and the drowning of Pharaoh in it. He has often shaken the kingdoms that were most secure; and he has now given commandment concerning this merchant-city, to destroy the strong holds thereof. As its beauty shall not intercede for it, but that shall be stained; so its strength shall not protect it, but that shall be broken. If any think it strange that a city so well fortified, and that has so many powerful allies, should be so totally ruined, let them know that it is the Lord of hosts that has given a commandment to destroy the strong holds thereof; and who can gainays his orders, or hinder the execution of them?

(2.) The Chaldeans shall be the instruments of it; (v. 13.) Behold the land of the Chaldeans; how easily they and their land were destroyed by the Assyrians. Those that are in their own hands founded it, set up the towers of Babylon, and were there, but yet he, the Assyrian, brought it to ruin; whence the Tyrians might infer, that as easily as the old Chaldeans were subdued by the Assyrians, so easily shall Tyre be vanquished by those new Chaldeans. Babylon was built by the Assyrian, for them that dwell in the wilderness. It may be rendered, for the ships. The Assyrian founded it for shipmen; and shipmen that traffic upon those seas; ships of Tarshish, that traffic upon the Persian and Indian seas; for men of the desert; for Babylon is called the desert of the sea, ch. xxi. 1. Thus Tyrus was built upon the sea for the like purpose. But the Assyrians (says Dr. Lightfoot) brought that to ruin, now lately, in Hezekiah's time, and so shall Tyre, hereafter, be brought to ruin. He shall build Babylon, and shall not be confounded, and he shall rise again upon the falling and withering of others, we should not be so confident as we commonly are of the continuance of our own flourishing and standing.

15. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as a harlot. 16. Take a harp, go about the city,
thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered. 17 And it shall come to pass, after the end of seventy years, that the Lord will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth. 18 And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the Lord, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.

Here is,

I. The time fixed for the continuance of the desolations of Tyre, which were not to be perpetual desolations; Tyre shall be forgotten 70 years, v. 15. So long it shall lie neglected, and buried in obscurity. It was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar much about the time that Jerusalem was, and lay as long as it did in its ruins. See the folly of that proud ambitious court. What's more fitly paid than this? What's more fitting than that it should be for making himself master of Tyre, when all the inhabitants were driven out of it, and he had none of his own subjects to spare for the replenishing and fortifying of it? It is strange what pleasure men could take in destroying cities, and making their memorial perish with them, Ps. xiii. 6. He trampled on the pride of Tyre, and therein served God's purpose; but with greater pride, for which God soon after humbled him.

II. A prophecy of the restoration of Tyre to its glory again; After the end of 70 years, according to the years of one king, or one dynasty, or family, of kings, that of Nebuchadnezzar; when that expired, the desolations of Tyre came to an end. And we may presume that Cyrus at the same time, when he released the Jews, and encouraged them to rebuild Jerusalem, released the Tyrians also, and encouraged them to rebuild Tyre. Thus the prosperity and adversity of places, as well as persons, are set the one over against the other; that the most glorious cities may not be secure, nor the most ruins despirit. It is foretold,

1. That God’s providence shall again smile upon this ruined city: (v. 16.) The Lord will visit Tyre in mercy; for through his content, he will not contend for ever. It is not said, Her old acquaintance shall visit her, the colonies she has planted, and the trading cities she has had correspondence with; they have forgotten her; but, The Lord shall visit her by some unthought-of turn; he shall cause his indignation toward her to cease, and then things will run, of course, in their former channel. She shall raise her best endeavours to recover her trade again. She shall sing as a harlot, that has been some time under correction for her lewdness: but, when she is set at liberty, (so violent is the bent of corruption,) she will use her old arts of temptation. The Tyrians being returned from their captivity, and those that remained recovering new spirits thereupon, would be sufficiently encouraged to trade. That she shall procure the best choice of goods, undersell their neighbours, and be obilging to all customers; as a harlot that has been forgotten, when she comes to be spoken of again, recommends herself to company by singing and playing; takes a harp, goes about the city, perhaps in the night, serenading, makes sweet melody, and sings many songs. These are innocent and allowable diversions, if soberly and moderately and modestly used; but those that are attached to them should not be over fond of them, nor ambitious to excel in them; because, whatever they are now, anent they were some of the baits with which harlots used to entice fools. Tyre shall now by degrees come to be the mart of nations again; she shall return to her hire, to her traffic, and shall commit fornication: she shall have dealings in trade (for she carries on the similitude of a harlot) with all the kingdoms of the world, that she had formerly traded with in her prosperity. The love of worldly wealth is a spiritually wicked thing, and therefore covetous spirits are called adulterers and adulteresses, (James iv. 4.) and covetousness is spiritual idolatry.

3. That, having recovered her trade again, she shall make a better use of it than she had done formerly; and this good she should get by her calamities, (v. 18.) Her merchandise, and her hire, shall be holiness to the Lord. The trade of Tyre, and all the profits of her trade, shall be devoted to God and to his honour, and employed in his service. It shall not be treasured and hoarded up, as formerly, to be the matter of their pride, and the support of their carnal confidence; but it shall be laid out in acts of piety and charity. What, they can spare from the maintenance of themselves and their families, shall be for them that dwell before the Lord, for the priests, the men of the Lord; in Jerusalem; not to maintain them in pomp and grandeur, but that they and theirs may eat sufficiently, may have food convenient for them, with as little as may be of that care which would divert them from their ministration; and that they may have, not rich and fine clothing, but durable clothing, that which is strong and lasting clothing for all. So the priests, though they were young, must wear such plain, grave clothing as old men used to wear. Now, (1.) This supposes that religion should be set up in New Tyre, that they should come to the knowledge of the true God, and into communion with the Israel of God. Perhaps they being fellow-captives with the Jews in Babylon, (who had prophets with them the last,) disposed them to join with them in their worship there, and turned them from idols, as it cured the Jews of their idolatry; and when they were released with them, and, as they had reason to believe, for their sakes, when they were settled again in Tyre, they would send gifts and offerings to the temple, and presents to the priests. We find men of Tyre then dwelling in the land of Judah, Neh. xiii. 3. But that conversion was better disposed of in religion in Christ’s time, than the cities of Israel, for if Christ had gone among them, they would have repented, Matt. xi. 21. And we meet with Christians at Tyre, (Acts xxii. 3.) and, many years after, did Christianity flourish there. Some of the rabbins refer this prophecy of the conversion of Tyre to the days of the Messiah. (2.) It directs those that would be used of God and religion, and to reckon that best laid up, which is so laid out. Both the merchandise of the tradesman, and the hire of the day-labourers, shall be devoted to God. Both the merchandise, (the employment we follow,) and the hire, (the gain of our employment,) must be holiness to the Lord; alluding to the motto engraven on the frontlet of the high-Priest, (Exod. xxx. 8.) in the separation of the title under the law, Lev. xxvii. 30. See a promise like this referring to gospel-times, Zech. xiv. 20, 21. We must first give up ourselves to be holiness to the Lord, before what we do, or have, or get, can be so. When we abide with God in our particular callings, and do common actions after a godly sort, when we abstain in works of piety and charity, are liberal in our support, and supporting the ministry, and encouraging the gospel, then our merchandise and our hire are holiness to the Lord, if we sin surely look at his glory in it. And it need not
be treasured and laid up on earth; for it is tres-
sured and laid up in heaven, in bags that wax not old, Luke xii. 33.

CHAP. XXIV.

It is agreed that here begins a new sermon, which is con-
tinued to the xxvii. And this sermon is divided according to the directions he had received, does, in many precious promises, say to the righteous. It shall be well with them; and, in many dreadful threats and he says. If so it be wrought, it shall be ill with them (ch. 10, 11.) and those are interwoven, that they may illus-
trate each other. This chapter is, mostly, threatening; and as the judgments threatened are very sore and griev-
ously so, the fear that is entertained with them is correspond-
antly very great. It is not the burthen of any particular city or kingdom, as those before, but the burthen of the whole earth. The word indeed signifies only the land, because our own land is commonly to us all as one.

But it is here explained by several prophesies, and so that it is not so confined, it is the world, v. 4. So that it must, at least, take in a whole neighbourhood of nations. 1. Some think (and very probably) it is a prophecy of the great havoc that Sennacherib and his Assyrian army should now shortly make of many of the nations in that part of the world. 2. Others make it to point at the like devastations which, about 100 years after, Nebuchad-
nezzar and his army should make, and to the same coun-
tries; going from one kingdom to another, not only to con-
quer them, but to ruin them, and lay them waste; for that was the method which those eastern nations took in those wars that they were at, to lay waste the land, and threatenings, are intended for the support and comfort of the people of God in those very calamitous times. And since here are no particular nations named, either by the name of the country, or on whom; those desolations should make with them, I see not but it may refer to both these events. Nay, the scripture has many fulfilments, and we ought to give it its full latitude; and therefore I incline to think that the prophet, from those and other instances, in which he had a particular eye, to designs here to represent in general the calamitous state of mankind, and the many miseries which human life is liable to, especially those that are the outworks and preparing to the final consummation of things. It came not to pass, not only to foretell particular events, but to form the minds of men to virtue and piety, and for that end their prophecies were written and preserved, even for our learning, and therefore ought not to be looked upon as of private interpretation. Now, since a thorough conviction of the vanity of the world, and its insufficiency to make us happy, will go far toward bringing us to the feet of the Lord, and drawing out our affections towards another world, the prophet here shows what vexation of spirit we must expect to meet with in these things, that we may never take up our rest in them, nor promise our-
selves satisfaction upon them. And, short as is the enjoyment of God. In this chapter, we have. 1. A threatening of desolating judgments for sin; (v. 1. 12.) to this is added an assurance, that, in the midst of them, good promises should be joined. (v. 13. 14.) 2. The threatning of the like desolations, (v. 16. 22.) to which is added an assurance, that, in the midst of all, God should be glorified.

1. BEHOLD, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. 2. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. 3. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled; for the Lord hath spoken this word. 4. The earth mourneth, and fadeth away; the world languisheth, and fadeth away; the haughty people of the earth do languish. 5. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. 6. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left. 7. The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merry-hearted do sigh. 8. The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endless, the joy of the harp ceaseth. 9. They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it. 10. The city of confusion is broken down; every house is shut up, that no man may come in. 11. There is a crying for wine in the streets; all joy is dark-
ened, the mirth of the land is gone. 12. In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction.

It is a very dark and melancholy scene that this prophecy presents to our view; turn our eyes which way we will, every thing looks dismal. The deso-
lations are here described in a great variety of ex-
pessions to the same purpose, and all aggravating. 1. The earth is stripped of all its emoluments and looks as if it were taken off its basis; it is made empty and waste, (v. 1.) as if it were reduced to its first chaos, Tohu and Bohu, nothing but confusion and emptiness, (Gen. 1. 2.) without form and void. It is true, earth sometimes signifies the land, and so the same word Eretz is here translated; (v. 3.) the land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoilt; but I see not why it should not there, as well as v. 1. be translated the earth; for most commonly, if not always, where it signifies some one particular land, it has something joined to it, or, at least, not far from it, which does so appropriate it; as, the land (or earth) of Egypt, or Canaan; or this land, or ours, or ours, or the like. It might indeed refer to some particular country, and an ambiguous word might be used to warrant such an application; for it is good to apply to ourselves, and our own lands, what the scripture says in general, of the va-
nity and vexation of spirit that attend all things here below; but it should seem designed to speak what often happens to many countries, and will do while the world stands, and what may, we know not how often, happen to our own, and what is the general character of all earthly things, they are empty of all solid comfort and satisfaction, a little thing makes them waste. We often see numerous families, and plentiful estates, utterly emptied, and utterly spoilt, by one judgment or other, or perhaps only by a gradual and insensible decay. Sin has turned the earth upside down; the earth is become quite a different thing from what it was. It is but a small part of what made it to be his habitation. Sin has also scattered abroad the inhabitants thereof; the rebellion at Bab-
el was the occasion of the dispersion there. How many ways are there in which the inhabitants both of towns and of private houses are scattered abroad, so that near relations and old neighbours know noth-
ing of one another? To the same purport, v. 4. The earth mourneth, and fadeth away; it brings forth those that placed their happiness in it, and raised their expectations high from it, and proves not what they promised themselves it would be; The whole world languishes and fadeth away, as hastening to-
ard a dissolution. It is, at the best, like a flower, which withers in the hands of those that please
themselves too much with it, and lay it in their bosoms. And as the earth itself grows old, so they that dwell therein are desolate: men carry crazy, sickly bodies along with them, are often solitary, and confounded by affliction. v. 6. When the earth languishes, and is not so fruitful as it used to be, then they that dwell therein, that make it their home, and rest and portion, are desolate; whereas they that by faith dwell in Zion can rejoice in his favor, when the fig-tree does not blossom. If we look abroad, and see in how many places pestilences and burning fevers rage, and what multitudes are swept away by them in a little time, so that sometimes the living scarcely suffice to bury the dead, perhaps we shall understand what the prophet means, when he says, The inhabitants of the earth are burned, or consumed, and there is no man to lay his hand upon another, and there are but few men left, in comparison. Note, The world we live in is a world of disappointment, a vale of tears, and a dying world; and the children of men in it are but of few days, and full of trouble.

II. It is God that brings all these calamities upon them; the Lord that made the earth, and made it fruitful, and gave it to the service and comfort of man, now makes it barren and unfruitful; (v. 5.) for his Creator is, and will be, his Judge; he has an incontestable right to pass sentence upon it, and an irresistible power to execute that sentence. It is the Lord that has spoken this word, and he will do the work; (v. 3.) it is his curse that has devoured the earth, (v. 6.) the general curse which sin brought upon the ground for man's sake, (Gen. iii. 17.) and all the particular curses which families and classes of ourselves bring upon themselves by their enormous wickedness. See the power of God's curse, how it makes all empty, and lays all waste; those whom he curses, are cursed indeed.

III. Persons of all ranks and conditions shall share in these calamities; (v. 2.) It shall be, as with the people, so with the priest, &c. This is true of many of the common calamities of human life; all are subject to the same diseases of body, sorrows of mind, afflictions in relations, and the like; there is one event to those of very different stations; time and chance happen to them all. It is in a special manner true of the destroying judgments which God sometimes brings upon sinful nations; when he pleases, he can make them universal, so that none shall escape, or be excepted from them; whether men have little or much, they shall be shewn to be in the same measure smart first by famine; but those of the higher rank go first into captivity, while the poor of the land are left. It should be all alike, 1. With high and low; As with the people, so with the priest, and prince. The dignity of magistrates and ministers, and the respect and reverence owing to them, shall not secure them; the faces of elders are not hid, Isa. x. 2. The priests had been as corrupt and wicked as the people; and if their character serve not to restrain them from sin, how can they expect it should serve to secure them from judgments? In both, it is like people, like priest, Hos. iv. 8, 9. 2. With bond and free; As with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; they have all corrupted their way, and turned aside from the law of the Lord. Lam. v. 8. He made them desolate when the earth was made waste. 3. With rich and poor; those that have money beforehand, that are purchasing, and letting out money to interest, will fare no better than those that are so impoverished, that they are forced to sell their estates, and take up money at interest. There are judgments short of the great day of judgment, in which rich and poor meet together. Let not those that are advanced in the world, set their inferiors at too great a distance, because they know not how soon they may be set upon a level with them. The rich man's wealth is his strong city, in his own conceit; but it does not always prove so.

IV. It is sin that brings these calamities upon the earth; Therefore the earth is made empty, and fades away, because it is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; (v. 5.) it is polluted by the sins of men, and therefore it is made desolate by the judgments of God. The filthy nature of sin, that defiles the earth itself under the inhabitants thereof, and it is rendered unpleasant in the eyes of God and good men. See Lev. xvi. 13, 27, 28. Blood, in particular, defiles the land, Numb. xxxv. 33. The earth never spres out its inhabitants, till they have first defiled it by their sins. Why, what have they done? 1. They have transgressed the commandments of the Lord, and do not keep his ordinances, and the judgments of his courts; and therefore it is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, and is rendered unpleasant in the eyes of God and good men. 2. They have changed the ordinances of revealed religion, those of them that have had the benefit of that. They have neglected the ordinances, so some read it and have made no conscience of observing them; they have passed over the laws, in the commission of sin; and have tasted of the judgments of God, and omitted duty. 3. Herein they have broken the everlasting covenant, which is a perpetual bond, and will be to those that keep it a perpetual blessing. It is God's wonderful condescension, that he is pleased to deal with men in a covenant-way; to do them good, and thereby obligate them to do him service. Even those that had no benefit by God's covenant with Abraham, had benefit by his covenant with Noah and his sons, which is called an everlasting covenant, his covenant with day and night; but they observe not the precepts of the sons of Noah, they acknowledge not God's goodness in the day and night, nor study to make him any grateful returns, and so break the everlasting covenant, and defeat the gracious designs and intentions of it. V. These judgments shall humble men's pride, and mar their mirth; when the earth is made empty. 1. It is a great mortification to men's pride; (v. 4.) The haughty people of the earth do languish; for they have lost that which supported their pride, and for which they magnified themselves; those that have held their heads highest, God can make hang the head. It is a great damp to men's jollity; this is enlarged upon much; (v. 7–9.) All the merry-hearted do sigh; such is the nature of carnal mirth, it is but the cracking of thorns under a pot, Ecc. vii. 6. Great laughters commonly end in a sigh: they that make the world their chief joy, cannot rejoice evermore. When God sends his judgments into the earth, he designs thereby to make those serious that were wholly addicted to their pleasures; Let your laughter be turned into mourning. When the earth is emptied, the noise of them that rejoice in its ends. Carnal joy is a noisy thing; but the noise of it will soon be at an end, and the end of it is heaviness. Two things are made use of to excite and express vain mirth, and the jovial crew is here deprived of both; (1.) Drinking; the new wine murmurs, it is grown sour for want of drinking; for, how proper your it may be turned into heart, (Prov. xxxi. 6.) it does not flourish then as it does in a merry-hearted: the vine languishes, and gives little hopes of a vintage, and therefore the merry-hearted do sigh; for they knew no other gladness than that of their corn and wine and oil increasing, (Ps. iv. 7.) and if you destroy their vines and their fig-trees, you make all their mirth to cease, Hos. xi. 11, 12. They shall not now drink wine with a song, as they used, 12, 13, and with huzzas; but rather drink it with a sigh. nay, Strong drink shall be bitter to them that
drink it, because they cannot but mingle their tears with it; or, through sickness, they have lost the relish of it. God has many ways to imbibit wine and strong drink to them that love them, and have the highest gust of them; distemper of body, anguish of mind, the ruin of the estate or country; will make the strong drink bitter, and all the delights of sense tasteless and insipid. (2.) Music: The mirth of tabrets ceases, and the joy of the harp, which used to be at their feasts, ch. v. 12. The captives in Babylon hang their harps on the willow trees. In short, all joy is darkened, there is not a pleasant look to be seen, nor any one to have a smile; all the mirth of the land is gone, (v. 11.) and if it were that mirth which Solomon calls madness, there is no great loss of it.

VI. The cities will in a particular manner feel from these desolations of the country; (v. 10.) The city of confusion is broken, is broken down; so we read it; it lies exposed to invading powers, not only by the breaking down of its walls, but by the confusion that the inhabitants are in; every house is shut up; perhaps by reason of the plague, which has burned or consumed the inhabitants, so that there are few men left, v. 6. Houses infected are usually shut up, that no man may come in; or, they are shut up because they are deserted and uninhabited. There is a crying for wine, for the spoiling of the vintage, so that there is like to be no wine. In that city, in Jerusalem itself, that had been so much frequented, there shall be left nothing but desolation; grass shall grow in the streets, and the gate is smitten with destruction; (v. 12.) all that used to pass and repass through the gate, are smitten, and all the strength of the city is cut off. How soon can God make a city of order a city of confusion, and then it will soon be a city of desolation!

13. When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive-tree, and as the gleaning-grapes when the vintage is done. 14. They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord, they shall cry aloud from the sea. 15. Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires, even the name of the Lord God of Israel in the islands of the sea.

Here is mercy remembered in the midst of wrath; in Jerusalem and Judah, and the neighbouring countries, when they are overthrown by the enemy, Senacherib or Nebuchadnezzar, there shall be a remnant preserved from the general ruin, and it shall be a devout and pious remnant. And this method God usually observes, when his judgments are abroad; he does not make a full end, ch. vi. 13. Or, we may take it thus; Though the greatest part of mankind are ruinous, and the shaking of the earth, and the making of that desolate, yet there are some few who understand themselves better, who have laid up their treasure in heaven, and not in things below, and therefore can keep up their comfort and joy in God, even then when the earth mourns and fades away.

Observe, 1. The small number of this remnant: (v. 13.) They shall lift up their voice, there shall be as the shaking of an olive-tree, and the gleaning-grapes, here and there one, who shall escape the common calamity, (as Noah and his family, when the old world was drowned,) that shall be able to sit down upon a heap of the ruins of all their creature-comforts, and even then rejoice in the Lord, (Hab. iii. 16—18.) who, when all faces gather blackness, can lift up their heads with joy, Luke xxii. 26, 29. These few are dispersed, and at a distance from each other, like the gleanings of the olive-tree; and they are concealed, hid under the leaves. The Lord only knows them that are his, the world does not.

2. The great devotion of this remnant, which is the greater for their hatred of their strife, and which expatiate this great destruction; (v. 14.) They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing. (1.) They shall sing for joy in their deliverance; when the mirth of carnal worldlings ceases, the joy of the saints is as lively as ever; when the merry-hearted do sigh because the vine languishes, the upright-hearted do sing because the covenant of grace, the fountain of their comforts, and the foundation of their hopes, never fails; they that rejoice in the Lord, can rejoice in tribulation, and by faith may be in triumphs, when all about them are in tears. (2.) They shall sing to the glory and praise of God; shall sing not only for the mercy, but for the majesty, of the Lord: their songs are awful and serious, and in their spiritual joys they have a reverent regard to the greatness of God, and keep at an humble distance, when they attend him with their praises. The majesty of the Lord, which is matter of terror to wicked people, furnishes the saints with songs of praise. They shall sing for the magnificence, or transcendent excellency, of the Lord, showed both in his judgments and in his mercies; for we must sing, and sing unto him, of both, Ps. vi. 1. Those who have only, or all their wealth, in our Lord and in Christ, in his love (that being emptied and made desolate,) to the Lord and the islands of the sea, shall from thence cry aloud; their dispersion shall help to spread the knowledge of God, and they shall make even remote shores to ring with his praises. It is much for the honour of God, if those who fear him rejoice in him, and praise him, even in the most melancholy times.

3. Their holy zeal to excite others to the same devotion; (v. 15.) they encourage their fellow-sufferers to do likewise. (1.) Those who are in the fires, in the furnace of affliction, these fires by which the inhabitants of the earth are burned, v. 6. Or, in the valleys, the low, dark, dirty places. (2.) Those who are in the isles of the sea, whether they are banished, or are forced to flee for shelter, and hide themselves remote from all the tumult; they went through fire and water; (Ps. lxxvii. 13.) they both let them glorify the Lord, and glorify him as the Lord God of Israel. They who through grace can glory in tribulation, ought to glorify God in tribulation, and give him thanks for their comforts, which abound as their afflictions do abound. We must in every fire, even the hottest, in every isle, even the remotest, keep up our good thoughts of God; when, though he slay us, yet we trust in him; though, for his sake, we are killed all the day long, yet none of these things move us, then we glorify the Lord in the fires: thus the three children, and the martyrs that sang at the stake.

10. From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous. But I said, My leanness, my leanness, wo unto me! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously. 17. Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. 18. And it shall come to pass, that he which fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the
foundations of the earth do shake. 19. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is cleanly dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. 20. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it: and it shall fall, and not rise again. 21. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. 22. And they shall be gathered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. 23. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients, gloriously.

These verses, as those before, plainly speak,

I. Comfort to saints; they may be driven, by the common calamities of the places where they live, into the uttermost parts of the earth, or perhaps they are forced thither for their religion; but their songs are singing, and their glad tidings of this are soothing the Lord in the fires; or, the meaning may be, These songs redound to the glory or beauty of the righteous that sing them. We do the greatest honour imaginable to ourselves, when we employ ourselves in honouring and glorifying God. This may have reference to the sending of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth, as far off as this island of ours, in the days of the Messiah, to the farthest reaches of which are echoed back in songs heard from thence, from churches planted there, even glory to the righteous God, agreeing with the angel's song, Glory be to God in the highest, and glory to all righteous men; for the work of redemption was ordained before the world for our glory.

II. Terror to sinners; the prophet, having comforted himself and others with the prospect of a saved remnant, returns to lament the miseries he saw breaking in like a mighty torrent upon the earth: "But I said, My leanness, my leanness, wo unto me, (v. 16.) the very thought of it frets me, and makes me lean." He foresees,

1. The prevalency of sin, that iniquity should abound; (v. 16.) The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; this is itself a judgment, and that which provokes God to bring other judgments. (1.) Men are false to one another; there is no faith in man, but a universal dishonesty. Truth, that sacred bond of society, is departed, and there is nothing but treachery in men's dealings. See Jer. ix. 1, 2. (2.) They are all false to their God; as to him, and their covenant with him, the children of men are all treacherous dealers, and have dealt very treacherously with their God, in departing from their allegiance to him: this is the original, and this the aggravation of the sin of the world; and when men have been false to their God, how should they be true to any other?

2. The prevalency of wrath and judgment for that sin:

(1.) The inhabitants of the earth will be pursued from time to time, from place to place, by one mischief or other; (v. 17, 18.) Fear, and the pit, and the snare; one of the pit, and the snare, are upon them, wherever they are; for the sons of men know not what evil they may suddenly be snared in, Ezek. ix. 12. These three words seem to be chosen for the sake of an elegant paronomasia, or, as we nowmore correctly call it, a jingle of words; Pachad, and Pachath, and Pach; but the meaning is plain, (v. 18.) that evil pursues sinners, (Prov. xi. 21.) that the curse shall overtake the transgressor, (Deut. xxviii. 15.) that those who are secure, because they have escaped one judgment, know not how soon another may arrest them. What this prophet threatens all the inhabitants of the earth with, another makes part of the judgment of Meah, Jer. xlviii. 43, 44. But it is a common instance of the calamitous state of human life, that, when we seek to avoid one mischief, we fall into a worse, and that the end of one trouble is often the beginning of another; so that we are least safe when we are most secure.

(2.) The earth itself will be shaken to pieces; it will be literally so at last, when all the works therein shall be burnt up, and often, figuratively so, before that period; The windows from on high are open to pour down wrath, as in the universe I deliver upon the wickedness of men: from the fountains of the great deep being broken up, the foundations of the earth do shake of course, the frame of nature is unhinged, and all is in confusion. See how elegantly this is expressed; (v. 19, 20.) The earth is utterly broken down, it is clean dissolved, it is moved exceedingly, moved out of its place; God shakes heaven and earth. Hag. ii. 6. See the instances of the breaking down of the foundations of the earth, and mind those things; they place their confidence in that which shall shortly be utterly broken down and dissolved; the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard; so unsteady, so uncertain, are all the motions of these things. Worldly men dwell in it as in a palace, as in a castle, as in an impregnable tower; but it shall be removed like a cottage; so easily, so suddenly, and with so little loss to the great Landlord. The breaking down of the earth will be but like the pulling down of a cottage, which the country is willing to be rid of, because it does but harbour beggars; and therefore no care is taken to rebuild it, it shall fall and not rise again; but there shall be new heavens and a new earth, in which shall dwell nothing but righteousness.

What is it that shakes the earth thus, and sinks it? It is the transgression thereof that shall be heavy upon it. Note, Sin is a burthen to the whole creation; it is a heavy burthen, a burthen under which it groans now, and will sink at last. Sin is the ruin of states, and kingdoms, and families; they fall under the weight of that talent of lead, Zech. v. 7, 8.

(3.) God will have a particular controversy with the kings and great men of the earth; (v. 21.) He will punish the host of the high ones; hosts of princes are no more before God than hosts of common men; what can a host of high ones do with their combined force, when the Most High, the Lord of hosts, contends with them to abase their height, and scatter their hosts, and break all their confederacies? The high ones, that are on high, that are puffed up with their height and grandeur, that think themselves so high that they are out of the reach of any danger, God will visit upon them all their pride and cruelty, with which they have oppressed and injured their neighbours and subjects, and it shall now return upon their own heads. "The
kings of the earth shall now be reckoned with upon the earth, to show that verily there is a God that judges in the earth, and will render to the proudst of kings according to the fruit of their doings. Let those that are trampled upon by the high ones of the earth, comfort themselves with this, that, though they cannot, do not, must not, resist them, yet there is a God that will call them to an account, that will triumph over them upon their own dunghill; and the earth they are kings of, is, in the eye of God, no better. This is general only; it is particularly foretold, (v. 22,) that they shall be gathered together as prisoners; convicted, condemned prisoners are gathered in the pit, or dungeon, and thereby the tender of men's conscience is smitten; the kings and high ones, who took all possible liberty themselves, and took a pride and pleasure in shutting up others, shall now be themselves shut up. Let not the free man glory in his freedom, any more than the strong man in his strength, for he knows not what restraints he is reserved for; but after many days they shall be visited. Either, [1.] They shall be visited in wrath; it is the same word, in another form, that is used, v. 21. The Lord shall punish them; they shall be reserved to the day of execution, as condemned prisoners are, and as fallen angels are reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day, Jude 6. Let this account for the delays of divine vengeance; sentence is not executed speedily, because execution days shall be their punishment, and not come till after many days; but it is certain, that the wicked is reserved for the day of destruction, and is therefore preserved in the mean time, but shall be brought forth to the day of wrath, Job xxi. 50. Let us therefore judge nothing before the time. [2.] They shall be visited in mercy, and be discharged from their imprisonment, and shall again obtain, if not their liberty, yet a liberty to behave their barbarous in his conquests made many kings and princes his captives, and kept them in the dungeon in Babylon, and, among the rest, Jehoiachim king of Judah; but, after many days, when his head was laid, his son visited them, and granted (as should seem) some reviving to them all in their bondage; for it is made an instance of his particular kindness to Jehoiachin, that he set his throne above the throne of the rest of the kings that were with him, Jer. lii. 32. If we apply it to the general state of mankind, it denotes a revolution of conditions; those that were high are punished, those that were punished are relieved, after many days; that none in this world may be secure, though their condition be ever so prosperous, nor any depairable, though their condition be ever so deplorable.

3. Glory to God in all this, v. 23. When all this comes to pass, when the proud enemies of God's church are humbled and brought down, (1.) Then it shall appear, beyond contradiction, that the Lord reigns; which is always true, but not always evident. When the kings of the earth are punished for their tyranny and oppression, then it is proclaimed to all the world, that God reigns. He is above all kings, King above them, by whom they are conquerable. King over them, to whom they are accountable; that he reigns as Lord of hosts, of all hosts, of their hosts; that he reigns in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem: in his church, for the honour and welfare of that, pursuant to the promises on which that is founded, reigns in his word and ordinances; that he is the mediator between all his saints, especially before his ministers, the elders of his church, who have their eye upon all the ongoing of his power and providence, and, in all these events, observe his hand. God's ancients, the old disciples, the experienced Christians, that have often, when they have been perplexed, gone into the sanctuary of God in Zion and Jerusalem, and acquainted themselves with his manifestations of himself there, they shall see more than others of God's dominion and sovereignty in these operations of his providence. (2.) Then it shall appear, beyond contradiction, that he reigns gloriously, in such brightness and lustre, that, as a sun shall be conformed, and the sun ashamed, as the lesser lights are eclipsed and extinguished by the greater. Great men, who thought themselves to have as bright a lustre and as vast a dominion, as the sun and moon, shall be ashamed when God appears above them, much more when he appears against them; then shall the face of the sun be filled with shame, that they may see God's name. The eastern nations worshipped the sun and moon; but when God shall appear so gloriously for his people against his and their enemies, all these pretended deities shall be ashamed that ever they received the homage of their deduced worshippers. The glory of the Creator infinitely outshines the glory of the brightest creatures. In the great day, when the Judge of heaven and earth shall shine forth in his glory, the sun shall by his transcendent lustre be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood.

CHAP. XXV.

After the threatenings of wrath in the foregoing chapter, we have here, 1. Thankful praises for what God had done, which the prophet, in the name of the church, offers up to God, and teaches us to offer the like, v. 1, 2. Precious promises of what God would yet further do for his church, especially in the grace of the gospel, v. 6., 8. 11. The church's triumph in God over her enemies thereupon, v. 9, 12. This chapter looks as pleasantly upon the church as the former looked dreadfully upon the world.

1. O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name: for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.

2. For thou hast made of a city a heap; of a defended city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built.

3. Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee. 4. For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

5. Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.

1. It was said, in the close of the foregoing chapter, that the Lord of hosts shall reign gloriously now, in compliance with that, the prophet here speaks of the glorious majesty of his kingdom, (Ps. cxxv. 12.) and gives him the glory of it; and however it might have an accomplishment in the destruction of Babylon, and the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity there, it seems to look further, to the promises that should be offered up to God by the gospel-church, for Christ's victories over our spiritual enemies, and the comforts he has provided for all believers. Here.

1. The prophet determines to praise God himself: for they that would stir up others, should in the first place stir up themselves, to praise God: (v. 1.) "O Lord, thou art my God, a God it cove-
unt with me." When God is punishing the kings of the earth upon the earth, and making them tremble before him, a poor person can (v. 13) (and with a humble boldness, say, O Lord, thou art my God; and therefore I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name). Those that have the Lord for their God, are obliged to praise him; for therefore he took us to be his people, that we might be unto him for a name, and for a praise, Jer. xiii. 11. In praise of such him not that we can make him higher than he is, but we must make him to appear to ourselves and others higher than he does. See Exod. xv. 2.

II. He pleases himself with the thought that others also shall be brought to praise God; (v. 3.) "Therefore, because of the desolations thou hast made in the earth by the providence, (Ps. lxi. 8.) and the vengeance thou hast taken on thine and thy church's enemies, therefore will all people glorify thee in concert, and the city" (the metropolis) "of the terrible nations" (or the cities of such nations) "shall fear thee." This may be understood, 1. Of those people that have been strong and terrible against God; those that have been enemies to God's kingdom, and have fought against the interests of it with a great deal of strength and terror, will then all glorify God by joining with his people in his service, or, at least, convinced, so as to own themselves conquered. Those that had been the terror of the mighty, shall be forced to tremble before the judgments of God, and call in vain to rocks and mountains to hide them. Or, 2. Of those that shall be now made strong and terrible for God and him, through before they were weak and trampled upon. He shall so visibly appear for them, and with them, that fear God, and glorify him, that all shall acknowledge them a strong people, and shall stand in awe of them. There was a time when many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them, (Esther viii. 17.) and when they that knew their God, were strong, and did exploit, (Dan. xi. 32.) for which they glorify God.

III. He observes what is, and ought to be, the matter of this praise: we and others must exalt God, and praise him for,

1. He has done wonders according to the counsel of his own will, v. 1. We exalt God by admiring what he has done as truly wonderful; wonderful proof of his wisdom and power; and that his creature could perform; and wonderful proofs of his goodness. God's wonders are beyond what such sinful creatures as we are could expect. These wonderful things, which are new and surprising to us, and altogether unthought of, are, according to his counsels of old, devised by his wisdom, and designed for his own glory, and the comfort of his people. All the operations of providence are adapted to God's eternal counsels, (and those faithfulness and truth itself,) and consonant to his attributes, consistent with one another, and sure to be accomplished in their season.

2. He has in particular humbled the pride, and broken the power, of the mighty ones of the earth; (v. 2.) "Thou hast made of a city, of many a city, a heap of rubbish; of many a defenced city, that was set up against God by it called Solomon; (2 Kings x. 21.) and its people was as dust before a strong people, and as a heap of things that are to be made a ruin." What created strength can hold out against Omnipotence? "Many a city, so richly built, that it might be called a palace, and so much frequented and visited by persons of the best rank from all parts, that it might be called a palace of strangers, that hast made to be no city; it is levelled with the ground, and not one stone left upon another, and it shall never be built again." This has been the case of many cities in divers parts of the world, and in our own nation particularly: cities that flourished once, are gone to decay, and lost, and it is declared that it is the dust of an heap of rubbish out of the earth; where they stood. How many of the cities of Israel have long since been heaps and ruins! God hereby teaches us, that here we have no continuing city, and must therefore seek one to come, which will never be a ruin, or go to decay.

3. He has seasonably relieved and succoured his necessitous and distressed people; (v. 4.) Thou hast been the strength to them, when they needed strength, and when his distress drives him to God. And as he strengthens them against their inward decays, so he shelters them from outward assaults: he is a Refuge from the storm of rain and hail, and a Shadow from the scorching heat of the sun in summer. God is a sufficient Protection to his people in all weathers, both hot and cold, wet and dry; the armour of his people is a warm garment, when the weather is cold, and a cool cloak, when the weather is warm. Whatsoever dangers or troubles God's people may be in, effectual care is taken that they shall sustain no real hurt or damage. When perils are most threatening and alarming, God will then appear for the safety of his people; when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall, which makes a great noise, but cannot overthrow the wall. The enemies of God's poor are terrible ones: they do all they can to make themselves so to them; their rage is like a blast of wind, loud, and blustering, and furious; but, like the wind, it is under a divine check; for God holds the winds in his fists; and God will be such a Shelter to his people, that they shall be able to stand the shock, keep their ground, and maintain their integrity and peace. A storm, beating on a ship, tosses it, but that which beats on a wall never stirs it, Ps. lxv. 10.—cxxxviii. 7.

4. That he does, and will, shelter those that trust in him, from the insinence of their proud oppressors; (v. 5.) Thou shalt, or thou dest, bring down the noise of strangers, then shalt abate and still it, as the heat in a dry place is abated and moderated by the shadow of a cloud interposing. Then, or rather, through and through, the noise of the terrible ones shall be brought low, and they shall be made to change their note, and fall their voice. Observe, here, (1.) The oppressors of God's people are called strangers; for they forget that those they oppress are made of the same mould, of the same blood, with them. They are called terrible ones; for so they affect to be, rather than amiable, as the serpent. What is the case of the terrible ones shall be brought low, and they shall be made to change their note, and fall their voice. Observe, here, (1.) The insolences toward the people of God is noisy and hot, and that is all; it is but the noise of strangers, who think to carry their point by injecting and bullying all that stand in their way, and talking big. Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise, Jer. xlvii. 17. It is like the heat of the sun scorching in the middle of the day; but where is it, when the shadow is set? (2.) The insolences toward the people of God is noisy and hot, and that is all; it is but the noise of strangers, who think to carry their point by the ascendancy of their triumph, will be humbled and brought low, when their hopes are baffled, and all their honours laid in the dust. The braves, even the top branches, of the terrible ones, will be broken off, and thrown to the dung hill. (4.) If the labourers in God's vineyard be at any time called to bear the burden and heat of the day, he will find some way or other to refresh them; and make the shadow of a cloud, that they may not be pressed above measure.
6. And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. 7. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.

8. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.

If we suppose (as many do) that this refers to the great joy that should be in Zion and Jerusalem, either when the army of the Assyrians was routed by an angel, or when the Jews were released out of their captivity in Babylon, or upon occasion of some other equally surprising deliverance; yet we cannot avoid making it to look further, to the grace of the gospel, and the glory which is the crown and consummation of that grace; for it is at our resurrection that the Lord himself, and his people, are said to be brought to pass; then and not till then, (if we believe St. Paul), it shall have its full accomplishment; death is swallowed up in victory, 1 Cor. xv. 54. This is a key to the rest of the promises here connected together. And so we have here a prophecy of the salvation and the grace brought unto us by Jesus Christ, into which the prophets inquired, and searched diligently, 1 Pet. i. 10.

1. That the grace of the gospel should be a royal feast for all people; not like that of Ahasuerus, which was intended only to show the grandeur of the master of the feast; (Esther i. 4.) for this is intended to gratify the guests, and therefore, whereas all there was for show, all here is for substance. The preparations made in the gospel for the kind reception of penitents and suppliants with God, are often in the New Testament set forth by the similitude of a feast; as Matth. xxii. 1, &c. which seems to be borrowed from this here. (1.) God himself is the Master of the feast, and, we may be sure, he prepares like himself, as becomes him to give, rather than as becomes us to receive. The Lord of hosts makes this feast. (2.) The guests invited are, all people. Gentiles as well as Jews. 

(3.) The guest is God himself, and every creature. There is enough for all, and whoever will, may come, and take freely, even those that are gathered out of the highways and the hedges. (3.) The place is Mount Zion; thence the preaching of the gospel takes rise, the preachers must begin at Jerusalem. The gospel-church is the Jerusalem that is above, there this feast is made, and to it all the invited guests are invited. (4.) The preparation is very wonderful and calm; it is a feast which supposes abundance and variety; it is a continual feast to believers, it is their own: it if it be not. It is a feast of fat things and full of marrow; so relishing, so nourishing, are the comforts of the gospel to all those that feast upon them, and digest them. The returning prodigal was entertained with the fatted calf and good cheer. The good things in the gospel, with which his soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, is a feast of wines on the lees; the strongest-bodied wines, that have been kept long upon the lees, and then are well refined from them, so that they are clear and fine. There is that in the gospel, which, like wine soberly used, makes glad the heart, and raises the spirits, and is fit for those that are of a heavy heart, being under convictions of sin, and mourning for it; that they may drink, and forget their misery, (for that is the proper use of wine, it is a cordial for those that need it. Prov. xxxi. 6, 7.) may be of good cheer, knowing that their sins are forgiven, and may be vigorous in their spiritual work and warfare, as a strong man refreshed with wine.

2. That the world should be freed from that darkness of ignorance and mistake, in the midst of which it has been so long lost and buried; (y. 7.) He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering, (the covering over the face of the earth, with which all people are covered, (hoodwinked or blinded,) so that they cannot see their way, nor go about their work, and by reason of which they wander endlessly. Their faces are covered as men condemned, or as dead men. There is a veil spread over all nations; to all they sat in darkness; and no marvel, which the Jews themselves, among whom God was known, had a veil upon their hearts, 2 Cor. iii. 13. But this veil the Lord will destroy, by the light of his gospel shin ing in the world, and the power of his spirit opening men's eyes to receive it. He will raise these to spiritual life, that had long been dead in trespasses and sins.

3. That death should be conquered, the power of it broken, and the property of it altered: He will swallow up death in victory, v. 8. (1.) Christ will take away death itself, as a thing belonging to the victory of the gospel, and will break its bands, its bars, asunder, and cast away all its cords. The grave seemed to swallow him up, but really he swallowed it up. (2.) The happiness of the saints shall be cut of the reach of death, which puts a period to all the enjoyments of this world, inhabits them, and stains the beauty of them. (3.) Believers may triumph over death, and look upon it in a conquered enemy; O death, where is thy sting? (4.) When the dead bodies of the saints shall be raised at the great day, and their mortality swallowed up of life, then death will be for ever swallowed up of victory; and it is the last enemy.

4. That grief shall be banished, and there shall be perfect and endless joy; The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces. Those that mourn for sin, shall be comforted, and have their consciences pacified. In the covenant of grace there shall be that provided, which is sufficient to balance all the sorrows of this present time, to wipe away our tears, and to refresh us. Those particularly that suffer for Christ, shall have consolations abounding as their afflictions do abound. But in the joys of heaven, and no where short of them, will fully be known and enjoyed. (5.) It is said of the third heaven, that it is that God shall wipe away all tears. Rev. x. 17.—xxi. 4. And therefore there shall be no more sorrow, because there shall be no more death. The hope of this should now wipe away all excessive tears, all the weeping that hinders sowing.

5. That all the reproach cast upon religion and the serious professors of it, shall be for ever rolled away; The reproach of it, of people, that have long lain under, the-number and misrepresentations by which they have been blackened, the insolence and cruelty with which their persecutors have trampled on them and treaden them down, shall be taken away. Their righteousness shall be brought forth as the light, in the view of all the world, who shall be convinced they are not such as they have been invincibly characterized, which they have salvation from the injuries done them, as such, shall be wrought out. Sometimes in this world God does that for his people, which takes away their reproach from among men. However, it will be done effectually at the great day, for the Lord has spoken it, who can, and will, make it good. Let us patiently bear sorrow and shame now, and improve both; for shortly both will be done away.

9. And it shall be said in that day, Lo,
this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. 10. For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill. 11. And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim; and he shall bring down their pride together with the spoils of their hands. 12. And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust.

Here is,

I. The welcome which the church shall give to these blessings promised in the foregoing verses; (v. 9.) It shall be said in that day, with a humble, holy triumph and exultation, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him! Thus will the deliverance of the church out of long and sore troubles be celebrated; thus will it be as life from the dead. With such a prospect of joy and praise will those entertain the glad tidings of the Redeemer, who looked for him, and for redemption in Jerusalem by him; and with such a triumphant song as this, will glorified saints enter into the joy of the Lord. 1. God himself must have the glory of all; "Lo, this is our God, this is the Lord. This which is fine, is he doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Herein he hath, like himself, magnified his own wisdom, power, and goodness. Herein he has done for us like our God, a God in covenant with us, and whom we serve." Note, Our triumphs must not terminate in what God does for us, and gives to us; but must pass through them to himself, who is the Author and Giver of them; This is our God. Have any of the nations of the earth such a God to trust in? No, their rock is not as on Rock; there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun. (2.) The longer it has been expected, the more welcome it is. "This is he whom we have waited for, in dependence upon his word of promise, and a full assurance that he would come in the set time, in due time, and therefore we were willing to tarry his time. And now we find it is not in vain to wait for him; for the mercy comes at last, with an abundant recompense for the delay." (3.) It is matter of joy unspeakable; "We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. We that share in the benefits of it will concur in the joyful thanksgivings for it." (4.) It is an encouragement to hope for the continuance and perfection of this salvation; We have waited for him, and he will save us, will carry on what he has begun; for, as for God, our God, he will work in a manner of further blessings for the securing and perpetuating of these.

1. The power of God shall be engaged for them, and shall continue to take their part; in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest, v. 10. The church and people of God shall have continued proofs of God's presence with them, and residence among them, his hand shall be continually stretched out to them, to protect and guard them, and continually stretched out to them, for their supply. Mount Zion is his rest for ever; here he will dwell.

2. The power of their enemies, that is engaged against them, shall be broken. Moab is here put for all the adversaries of God's people, that are vexatious to them; they shall all be trodden down, or threshed, (for then they beat out the corn by troubling it,) and shall be thrown out as straw to the dunghill, being good for nothing else. God having caused his hand to rest upon this mountain, it shall not be a hand that hangs down, or is folded up, feeble and inactive; but he shall spread forth his hands, in the midst of his people, like one that swims; which signifies that he will employ and exert his power for them vigorously, that he will be doing for them on all sides; that he will easily and effectually put by the opposition that is given to his gracious intentions for them, and thereby further and push forward his good work among them; and that he will be continually active on their behalf, for so the swimmer is. It is foretold, particularly, what shall be done for them; (1.) He shall bring down the pride of their cities (which Moab was notoriously guilty of, ch. xvi. 6.) by one humble judgment after another, stripping them of that which they are proud of. (2.) He shall bring down the spoils of their hands, shall take from them that which they have got by spoil and rapine; he shall bring down the arms of their hands, which are lifted up against God's Israel; he shall quite break their power, and disable them to do mischief. (3.) He shall ruin all their fortifications. v. 12. Moab has his walls, and his high forts, with which he hopes to secure himself, and from which he designs to annoy the people of God; but God shall bring them all down, lay them low, bring them to the ground, to the dust; and so they who trusted to them will be left exposed. There is no fortress impregnable to God. (4.) He shall bring down the nations to which Moab is engaged, to the highest and most formidable, and the arm of the Lord can overtop it, and bring it down. This destruction of Moab is typical of Christ's victory over death, (spoken of v. 8.) his spoiling principalties and powers in his cross, (Col. ii. 15.) his pulling down of Satan's strong holds by the preaching of his gospel, (2 Cor. x. 4.) and his reigning till all his enemies be made his footstool, Ps. cx. 1.

CHAP. XXVI.

This chapter is a song of holy joy and praise, in which the great things God had engaged, in the foregoing chapter, to do for his people against his enemies and their enemies, are celebrated: it is prepared to be sung when that prophecy should be accomplished; for we must be forward to meet God with our thanksgiving, when he is coming to visit his house, which is the church; and the people of God are here taught, 1. To triumph in the safety and holy security both of the church in general, and of every particular member of it, under the divine protection, v. 1., 4. To triumph in the presence and power of God, and wait for him, in the worst and darkest times, v. 7., 9. IV. To lament the stupidity of those who regarded not the providence of God, either merciful or afflictive, v. 10., 11. V. To encourage themselves, and one another, with hopes that God would still continue to do them good, (v. 12., 14.) engaging themselves to continue in his service, v. 13. VI. To recollect the providences of God that had respected them in the past, and to explain and defend their conduct under those providences, v. 15., 18., 21. VII. To rejoice in hope of a glorious deliverance, which should be as a resurrection to them, (v. 19.) and to retire in the expectation of God's further establishment and dealing with them. And this is written for the support and assistance of the faith and hope of God's people in all ages, even those upon whom the ends of the world are come.

1. In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. 2. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. 3. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. 4. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah Vahan is everlasting strength.
To the prophecies of gospel-grace very fitly is a song annexed, in which we may give God the glory, and take to ourselves the comfort, of that grace; In that day, the gospel-day, which the day of the victories and enlargements of the Old Testament church was typical of, (to some of which perhaps this has a primary reference,) in that day, this song shall be sung; there shall be persons to sing it, and cause and hearts to sing it; it shall be sung in the land of Judah, which was a figure of the gospel-church; for the gospel-covenant is said to be made with the house of Judah, Heb. viii. 8.

Glorious things are here said of the church of God: 
1. That it is strongly fortified against those that are without it, and is a bulwark of strength and hope to build upon; and the house built on that rock will stand and weather every storm of adversity. That trust in God shall not only find in him, but receive from him, everlasting strength, strength that will carry them to everlasting life, to that blessedness which is forever; and therefore let them trust in him for ever, and never cast away or change their confidence.

5. For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city he layeth it low; he layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust.
6. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.
7. The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just.
8. Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.
9. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.
10. Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord.
11. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.

Here the prophet further encourages us to trust in the Lord for ever, and continue waiting on him, for, I. He will make humble souls that trust in him, to triumph over their proud enemies; (v. 5, 6.) that they exalt themselves shall be abased, for he brings down them that dwell on high; and wherein they dwell prudently, he is, and will be, above them; even the lofty city, Babylon itself, or Nineveh, he lays it low, ch. xxvi. 12. He can do it, be it ever so well fortified. He has often done it; he will do it, for he resists the proud, it is his glory to do it, for he proves himself to be God by looking on the proud, and abusing them, Job xl. 12. But, on the contrary, they that humble themselves shall be exalted; for the feet of the poor shall tread upon the lofty cities, v. 6. He does not say, Great cities shall be forever cut out. When God will have it done, even the feet of the poor shall do it; (Mal. iv. 5.) Ye shall tread down the wicked; come, set your feet on the necks of these kings. See Ps. cxlvii. 6. Rom. xvi. 20.

II. He takes cognizance of the way of his people, and has delight in it; (v. 7.) The way of
31. It is our duty, and will be our comfort, to wait for God, and to keep up holy desires toward him, in the darkest and most discouraging times, vi. s. 9. This has always been the practice of God's people, even then when God has frowned upon them: 1. To keep up a constant dependence upon him; "In the way of thy judgments we have still waited for thee; when thou hast corrected us, we have looked to no other hand than thine to relieve us," as the servant says only to the hand of his master, till that he have mercy upon him, Ps. cxxiii. 2. We cannot possibly discontinue our prayers, but must send up holy desires toward him; If God's judgments continue long, if it be a road of judgments, (so the word signifies,) yet we must not be weary, but continue waiting. 2. To send up holy desires toward him; our troubles, how pressing soever, must never put us out of concert with our religion, nor turn us away from God; but still the desire of our soul must be to his name, and to the remembrance of him; and in the night, the darkest, longest night of affliction, with our souls we must desire him. (1.) Our great concern must be for God's name, and our earnest desire that that may be glorified, whatever becomes of us and our names. This is that which we must wait for, and pray for; "Father, glorify thy name, and we are satisfied." (2.) Our great comfort must be in the remembrance of that name, of all that whereby God has made himself known. This remembrance of God must be our great support and pleasure; and though sometimes we be unmindful of him, yet still our desire must be toward the remembrance of him, and we must take pains with our own hearts to have him always in mind. (3.) Our desires toward God must be inward, fervent, and sincere. With our soul we must desire him, with our soul we must pant after him, (Ps. xlii. 1) and with our spirits within us, with the innermost thought, and the closest application of mind, we must seek him. We make nothing of our religion, whatever our profession be, if we do not make heart-work of it. (4.) Even in the darkest night of affliction, our desires must be toward God, as our Sun and Shield; for however God is pleased to deal with us, we must never think the thing is done, and our days are ended. If our desires be indeed toward God, we must evidence it by seeking him, and seeking him early, as those that desire to find him, and dread the thoughts of missing him. They that would seek God, and find him, must seek betimes, and seek him earnestly. Though we come ever so early, we shall find him ready to receive us.

32. We may do this, and may expect God's grace in directing our ends abroad his judgments, thereby to bring men to seek him and serve him; When thy judgments are upon the earth, laying all waste, then we have reason to expect that not only God's professing people, but even the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness; will have their mistakes rectified and their lives reformed, will be brought to acknowledge God's righteousness in punishing them; will repent of their own uprightness in offending God, and so be brought to walk in right paths. They will do this; judgments are design'd to bring them to this, they have a natural tendency to produce this effect; and though many continue obstinate, yet some, even of the inhabitants of the world, will profit by this discipline, and will learn righteousness; surely they will, they are strangely stupid if they do not. Note, The intention of affliction is, to teach true righteousness; and blessed is the man from God's judgments, among those whom he will not see, and Discite justitiam, munditi, et non tenere dices—Let this rebuke teach you to cultivate righteousness, and cease from despising the gods. Virg.
for when he judges, he will overcome; They will not see, but they shall see; they shall be made to see, whether they will or no, that God is angry with them. Athiasts, scorners, and the secure, will shortly feel, what now they will not believe, That it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. They will not see the evil of sin, and particularly the sin of hating and persecuting the people of God; but they shall see, by the tokens of God’s displeasure against them for it, and the deliverances in which God will plead his people’s case, that what is done against them he takes as done against himself, and will reckon for it accordingly. They shall see that they have done God’s people a great deal of wrong, and therefore shall be ashamed of their enmity and envy towards them, and their usage of such as deserved better treatment. Note, Those that bear ill will to God’s people, have reason to be ashamed of it, so absurd and unreasonable is it; and, sooner or later, they shall be ashamed of it, and the remembrance of it shall fill them with confusion. Some read it, They shall see, and be confounded for the zeal of the people, by the zeal God will show for his people: when the people of God shall meet together with their honour and welfare of their people, they shall be confounded to think that they might have been of that people, and would not. Their doom therefore is, that since they slighted the happiness of God’s friends, the fire of his enemies shall devour them, that fire which is prepared for his enemies, and with which they shall be devoured, the fire designed for the devil and his angels. Note, That those that are enemies to God’s people, and envy them, God looks upon as his enemies, and will deal with them accordingly.

12. Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us. 13. O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name. 14. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish. 15. Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, thou hast increased the nation: thou art glorified; thou hast removed it far unto all the ends of the earth. 16. Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them. 17. Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord. 18. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world seen. 19. Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

The prophet, in these verses, looks back upon what God had done with them, both in mercy and judgment, and sings unto God of both; and then looks forward upon what he hoped God would do for them. Observe, 1. His reviews and reflections are mixed. When he looks back upon the state of the church, he finds, 2. That God had in many instances been very gracious to them, and had done great things for them; (v. 12.) Thou hast wrought all our works in us, or for us. Whatever good work is done by us, it is only to so good work we ought by the grace of God in us; it is he that puts good thoughts and affections into our hearts, if at any time they be there, and that works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Acti agimus—Being acted upon, we act. And if any kindness be showed us, or any of our affairs be prosperous and successful, it is God that works it for us; and every creature, every goodness, that are any way serviceable to our comfort, is he that makes them to be so. Sometimes he makes that to work for us, which seemed to make against us.

In particular, (v. 13.) Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, so that a little one has become a thousand; in Egypt they multiplied exceeding, and afterward in Canaan, so that they filled the land; and in this their present greatness, the multitude of the people is the honour of the nation, and therein God was glorified as faithful to his covenant with Abraham, that he would make him a father of many nations. Note, God’s nation is a growing nation, and it is the glory of God that it is so. The increase of the church, that holy nation, is therefore to be rejoiced in, because it is the increase of these that make it their business to glorify God in this world.

2. That yet he had laid them under his reprobation. (1.) The neighbouring nations had sometimes expressed them, and tyrannized over them; (v. 15.) “O Lord our God, thou hast made the sole right to rule us, whose subjects and servants we are, to thee we complain, (for whether else should we go with our complaints?) that other lords, besides thee, have had dominion over us.” Not only in the day of the Judges, but afterwards, God frequently sold them into the hands of their enemies; or rather, by their iniquities they sold themselves, ch. lii. 2—3. When they had been careless in the service of God, God suffered their enemies to have dominion over them, that they might know the difference between his service and the service of the kingdoms of the world. It may be understood of iniquity, sin, their serving other gods, and subjecting themselves to the superstitions and laws and customs of their neighbours, by which other lords (for they called their idols Baals, lords,) had dominion over them, beside God. But now they promise that it shall be so no more. “From henceforth by thee only will we make mention of thy name; we will worship thee only, and in that way only which thou hast instituted and appointed.” The same may be our penitent reflection. Other lords, besides God, have had dominion over us; every lust has been our lord, and we have been led captive by it; and it has been long enough, and too long, that we have, thus wronged both God and ourselves. The same therefore must be our present resolution, that from henceforth we will make mention of God’s name only, and in that only; that we will keep close to God and to our duty, and never desert it.

(2.) They had sometimes been carried into captivity before their enemies; (v. 15.) “The nation which at first thou didst increase, and make to take root, thou hast now diminished, and plucked up, and destroyed; they are become like to the utmost parts of heaven,” as is threatened, Dent. xxx. 4.—xlviii. 64. But observe, betwixt the mention of the increasing of them, and that of the removing of them, it is said, Thou art glorified; for
the judgments God inflicts upon his people for their sins, are for his honour, as well as the mercies he bestows upon them in performance of his promise. (3.) He remembers that when they were thus oppressed, and carried captive, they cried unto God; which was a good evidence that they neither had quite forsaken him, nor were quite forsaken of him, and that there were merciful intentions in the judgments they were under; (v. 16.) Lord, in trouble have they visited thee. This was usual with the people of Israel, and frequently, as the case of the Judges; when other lords had dominion over them, they humbled themselves, and said, The Lord is righteous, 2 Chron. xii. 6. See here, [1.] The need we have of afflictions; they are necessary to stir up prayer; when it is said, In trouble they have visited thee, it is implied that in their peace and prosperity they were strangers to God, kept at a distance from him, and seldom came near him at all. When the world smiled upon them, they had no occasion for his favours. [2.] The benefit we often have by afflictions; they bring us to God, quicken us to our duty, and show us our dependence upon him. Those that before seldom looked at God, now visit him; they come frequently, they become friendly, and make their court to him. Before, prayer came drop by drop; but now they pour it out; prayer: it comes now like water from a fountain, not like water from a still. They poured out a secret prayer; so the margin: praying is speaking to God, but it is a secret speech; for it is the language of the heart, otherwise it is not praying. Afflictions bring us to secret prayer, in which we may be more free and particular in our addresses to him, than we can be in public. In affliction, those will seek God early, who before sought him slowly. Hos. v. 13. It will make men fervent and fluent in prayer; They poured out a prayer, as the drink-offerings were poured out, when thy chastening was upon them. But it is to be feared, when the chastening is off them, they will by degrees return to their former carelessness, as they had often done. (4.) He complains that their struggles for their own liberty had been very painful and perilous, but that they had not been successful, v. 17, 18. [1.] They had the threes and pangs they dreaded; We have been like a woman in labour, that cries out in her pangs. We have with a great deal of anxiety and toil endeavoured to help ourselves, and our troubles have been increased by those attempts; as when Moses came to deliver Israel, the tale of bricks was doubled. Their prayers were quickened by the acuteness of their pains, and became as strong and vehement as the cries of a woman in sore travail; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord. It was a comfort and salvation to them, in their distress, that God had his eye upon them, that all their miseries were in his sight: he was no stranger to their pangs or their prayers; Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee. They had indeed been in their case before the Lord, and it was fit they should present themselves before the Lord with their complaints and petitions; they were in agonies like those of a woman in travail. [2.] They came short of the issue and success they desired and hoped for: We have been with child; we have had great expectation of a speedy and happy deliverance, have been big with hopes, and have been in travail with ourselves with this, that the joyful birth would make us forget our misery, John xvi. 21. But alas, we have as it were brought forth wind; it has proved a false conception, our expectations have been frustrated, and our pains have been rather dying pains than travailing ones; we have had a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. All our efforts have proved useless; we have not brought any deliverance in the earth, for ourselves or for our friends and allies; but rather have made our own case and theirs worse; neither have we inhabited that world, whom we have been contesting with, fallen before us, either in their power or in their hopes; but they are still as high and arrogant as ever. Note, A righteous cause may be strenuously pleaded both by prayer and endeavour, both with God and man; and yet for a great while may suffer, and the point not be gained. (5.) His prayers and hopes are very pleasant. In general, Thou wilt ordain peace for us, (v. 12.) all that good which the necessity of our case calls for. What peace the church has, or hopes for, it is of God's ordaining. And we may comfort ourselves with this, That what trouble soever may for a time be appointed to the people of God, peace will at length be ordained for them; for the end of all these men is peace. And if God by his Spirit would work all our works in us, he will ordain peace for us; for the work of righteousness shall be peace. And that is true and lasting peace, such as the world can neither give nor take away, which God ordains; for to those that have it, it shall be unchangeable as the ordinances of the day and of the night. And from what God has done for us, we may encourage ourselves to hope that he will yet further do us good. Thou hast armed his people and conscripted them, and therefore wilt; (Ps. x. 17.) and when this peace is ordained for us, then by thee only will we make mention of thy name; (v. 13.) we will give the glory of it to thee only, and not to any other. And we will depend upon thy grace only to enable us to do so. We cannot praise God's name, but by his strength. Two things in particular the prophet here comprehends as the chief improvement of the prospect of: 1. The amazing ruin of her enemies; (v. 14.) They are dead, those other lords that have had dominion over us; their power is irrecoverably broken, they are quite cut off and extinguished; and they shall not live, shall never be able to hold up the head any more. Being deposed, they shall not rise, but, like Haman, when they have begun to fall before the seed of the Jews, they shall sink like a stone. Because they are sentenced to this final ruin, therefore, in pursuance of that sentence, God himself has visited them in wrath, as a righteous Judge, and has cut off both the men themselves, (he has destroyed them,) and the remembrance of them; they and their names are buried together in the dust. He has made all their memory to perish; they are either forgotten, or made mention of with detestation. Note, The cause that is making the greatest opposition to God and his kingdom among men, though it may prosper awhile, will certainly sink at last, and all that adhere to it will perish with it. The Jewish doctors, comparing this with v. 19, infer, that the resurrection of the dead belongs to the Jews only, and that those of other nations shall not rise. But we know better; that all who are in Christ shall rise, and reign with him; and that this speaks of the final destruction of Christ's enemies, which is the second death. 2. The surprising resurrection of her friends, v. 19. Though the church rejoices not in the birth of the man-child, of which she travailed in pain, but has as it were brought forth wind; (v. 18.) yet the disappointment shall be balanced in a way equiva lent. They shall live, and be changed; they shall change their corruptible body into an incorruptible, and that speaks of the final destruction of Christ's enemies, which is the second death. 10. Together with my dead body
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If we believe the resurrection of the dead, of our dead bodies at the last day, as Job did, and the prophet here, that will facilitate our belief of the promised restoration of the church's luster and strength in this world. When God's time is come, how low soever she may be brought, they shall arise, even Jerusalem, the city of God, but now lying like a dead body, a carcass to which the eagles are gathered together. God shall cause her to rise, and seek out the habitation of her dead, and she shall arise, be built up, and flourish again. And therefore, let the poor, desolate, melancholy remains of its inhabitants, that dwell as in dust, awake and sing, for they shall see Jerusalem, the city of their solemnities, a quiet habitation again, ch. xxxiii.

20. The dew of God's favour shall be to it as the evening dew to the herbs, that were parched with the heat of the sun, it shall refresh them. And as the spring-dews, that water the earth, and make the herbs that lay buried in it, to put forth and bud, so shall they flourish again, and the earth shall cast out the dead, as it casts the herbs out of their roots. The earth, in which they seemed to be lost, shall contribute to their revival. When the church and her interests are to be restored, neither the dew of heaven, nor the favour of the Lord, is wanting to her interests to bring it about. Now this (as Ezekiel's vision, which is a comment upon it) may be fitly accommodated, (1.) To the spiritual resurrection of those that were dead in sin, by the power of Christ's gospel and grace. So Dr. Lightfoot applies it, Hor. Heb. in J oh. xii. 24. The Gentiles shall live, with my body shall they rise; they shall be called in after Christ's resurrection, shall rise with him, and sit with him in heavenly places; nay, they shall arise; says he: (says he;) they shall become the mystical body of Christ, and shall rise as part of him. (2.) To the last resurrection; when dead saints shall live, and rise together with Christ's dead body; for he rose as the First-Fruits, and believers shall rise by virtue of their union with him, and their communion in his resurrection.

21. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be past. 21. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain. These two verses are supposed not to belong to the song, which takes up the rest of the chapter, but to begin a new matter, and to be rather an introduction to the following chapter than the conclusion of others. Dr. Lightfoot, in the former, comes and enters into thy chambers; stay not abroad, lest you be caught in the storm, as the Egyptians in the hail. Exod. ix. 21. (1.) "Come into chambers of distinction; come into your own apartments, and continue not any longer mixed with the children of Babylon. Come out from among them, and be ye separate," 2 Cor. vi. 17. Rev. xviii. 4. If God has set apart them that are guilty for himself, they ought to set themselves apart. (2.) "Into chambers of defense; in which, by the secrecy, of them, or the strength, you may be safe in the worst of times." The attributes of God are the secret of his tabernacles, Ps. xxviii. 5. His name is a strong tower, into which we may run for shelter, Prov. xvii. 16. We must, by faith, find a way into these chambers, and there hide ourselves with a holy security and serenity of mind, we must put ourselves under the divine protection. Come, as Noah into the ark, for he shut the doors about him; when dangers are threatening, look not on the thing as it is, but to the word of the promise. And being thus delivered by the book Cheth. (3.) Into chambers of devotion; "Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door, Matth. vi. 6. Be private with God; enter into thy chamber, to examine thyself and commune with thy own heart, to pray, and humble thyself before God." This work is to be done in times of distress and danger; and thus we hide ourselves; we must not only shut the doors of our hearts, but we must conceal all that will hide us either under heaven or in heaven. Israel must keep within doors, when the destroying angel is slaying the first-born of Egypt, the blood on the door-posts will not secure them. So must Rahab and her family, when Jericho is destroyed. Those are most safe, that are least seen. Quis bene latuit, bene vivit,—He has lived well, who has been found in secret. 2. He assures them that the trouble would be over in a very short time; that they should not long be in any fright or peril; "Hide thyself for a moment, the smallest part of time we can conceive, like an atom of matter; nay, if you can imagine one moment shorter than another, it is but for a little moment, and that with a vast too, as it were, for a little moment, less than you think of; when it is over, it will seem as if everlasting to you, you will wonder how it is gone. You shall not need to lie long in confinement, long in concealment; the indignation will presently be past; the indignation of the enemies against you, their persecuting power and rage, which force you to ascend; when the wicked rise, a man is hid. This will soon be over, God will cut them off, will break their power, defeat their purposes, and find a way for your enlargement." When Athanasius was banished Alexandria by an edict of Julian, and his friends greatly lamented it, he bid them be of good cheer; Nubicula est qua eis pereantransit,—It is a little cloud that will soon blow over. You shall have tribulation ten days; that is all, Rev. ii. 10. This enables God's suffering people to call their afflictions light, that they are but for a moment.

3. He assures them that their enemies should be reckoned with for all the mischief they had done them by the sword, either of war or persecution, v. 21. The Lord will punish them for the blood they have shed. Here is, (1.) The judgment set, and process issued out; The Lord comes out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, in due season, as the showers upon the earth. There is a great deal of iniquity among the inhabitants of the earth; but, though they all combine in it, though hand in hand to carry it on, yet it shall not go unpunished. Beside the everlasting punishment into which the wicked shall go hereafter, there are often remarkable punishments of cruelty, oppression, and persecution, in this world. When men, going such an one after another, have done their worst, let them then expect God's indignation, for he sees that his day is coming, Ps. xxxviii. 13. God comes out of his place to punish; he shows himself in an extraordinary manner from heaven, the firmament of his power, from the sanctuary, the residence of his grace; he is raised up out of his holy habitation, where he seemed before to conceal himself; and now he will do some work great, the product of his wise; just, and secret counsels; as a prince that goes to take the chair, or take
as hard as a stone, and when he raises up himself, the mighty are afraid, 10. 12, 24, 25. The church has many enemies, but commonly some one that is more formidable than the rest. So Sennacherib was, in his day, and Nebuchadnezzar in his, and Antiochus in his; so Pharaoh had been formerly, and he is called leviathan, and the dragon, P. Lxxiv. 14. ch. ii. 9. Ezek. xxix. 3. The New Testament church has had its leviathans, we read of a fierce and red dragon ready to devour the church. Those malignant persecuting powers are here compared to the leviathan, for bulk and strength, and the mighty bustle they make in the world; to dragons, for their rage and fury; to serpents, piercing serpents, penetrating in their counsels, quick in their motions, which, if they once get in their head, will soon wind in their whole body; crossing like a bar, so the margin, standing in the way of all his neighbours and obstructing them; to crooked serpents, subtle and insinuating, but perverse and mischievous. Great and mighty princes, if they oppose the people of God, are, in God's account, as dragons and serpents, and plagues of mankind: and the Lord will punish them in due time. They are too big for men to deal with, and call to an account, and therefore the great God will take the doing of it into his own hands. He takes away the old sword and strong sword, wherewith to do execution upon them, when the measure of their iniquity is full, and their day is come to fall. It is emphatically expressed in the original: The Lord with his sword, that cruel one, and that great one, and that strong one, shall punish this unwieldy, this unruly criminal, and it shall be capital punishment; he shall slay the dragon, that is in the sea; for the wages of his sin is death. This shall not only be a prevention of his doing further mischief, as the slaying of a wild beast, but a just punishment for the mischief he has done, as the putting of a traitor or rebel to death. God has a strong sword for the doing of this; variety of judgments, sufficient to humble the proudest, and break the most powerful, of his enemies; and he will do it when the day of execution comes. In that day, he will punish; his day which is coming Ps. xxxvii. 13. This is applicable to the spiritual victories obtained by our Lord Jesus over the powers of darkness. He not only disarmed, spoiled, and cast out, the prince of this world, but, with his strong sword, the virtue of his death, and the preaching of his gospel, he does, and will, destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, that great serpent, as it is. If it had been known that it shall be bound, that he may not deceive the nations, and that is a punishment to him, Rev. xx. 2, 3. And, at length, for deceiving the nations, he shall be cast into the lake of fire, Rev. xx. 10. II. Of mercy to the church; in that same day, when God is punishing the leviathan, let the church and all her friends be easy and cheerful; let those that attend her, sing to her for comfort, sing her asleep with these assurances; let it be sung in her assemblies. 1. That she is God's vineyard, and is under his particular care, v. 2, 3. She is, in God's eye, a vineyard of red wine. The world is as a fruitless, worthless wilderness; but the church is enclosed as a vineyard, a peculiar place, and of value, that has got that care and protection from him, and her prosperity and from which precious fruits are gathered, where with they honour God and man. It is a vineyard of red wine, yielding the best and choicest grapes; intimating the reformation of the church, that it now brings forth good fruit unto God, whereas before it brought forth fruit to itself, or brought forth wild grapes, ch. v. 4. Now God takes care, (1.) Of the safety of this vineyard; if the Lord do keep it. He speaks this,
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as glorying in it, that he is, and has undertaken to
be, the Keeper of Israel: those that bring forth
fruit to God, and, shall be always, under his
protection, is the speaketh, as assuming that they
shall be so: I the Lord, that can do every thing,
but cannot lie nor deceive, I do keep it, lest any hurt it;
I will keep it night and day. God's vineyard in
this world lies much exposed to injury; there are
many that would hurt it, would tread it down, and
lay it waste; (Ps. lxxx. 13.) but God will suffer no
real hurt or damage to be done to his vine, from
brute good out of it. He will keep it constantly,
night and day; and not without need, for the ene-
 mies are restless in their designs and attempts against
it, and, both night and day, seek an opportunity to
do it a mischief. God will keep it in the night of
affliction and persecution, and in the day of peace
and prosperity, the temptations of which are no less
dangerous. God's people shall be preserved, not
only from the pestilence that worketh in darkness,
but from the destruction that wasteth at noon-day.
Ps. xci. 6. This vineyard shall be well fenced.
(2.) Of the fruitfulness of this vineyard; I will
water it every moment, and yet it shall not be over-
watered. The still and silent dews of God's grace
and blessing shall continually descend upon it; that it
may be fruitful to purpose, and that the continual
and constant and continual waterings of the divine grace:
for if that be at any time withdrawn, we wither,
and come to nothing. God waters his vineyard by
the ministry of the word, that is, by his servants the
prophets, whose doctrine shall drop as the dew.
Paul plants, and Apollos waters, but God gives the
increase; for without him the watchman wakes,
and the husbandman waters, in vain.
2. That though sometimes he contends with his
people, yet, upon their submission, he will be re-
conciled to them, v. 4. 5. Fury is not in him to-
ward his vineyard; though he meets with many
things in it that are offensive to him, yet he does
not seek advantages against it, nor is extreme to
mark what is amiss in it. It is true, if he find in
it briers and thorns instead of vines, and they be set
in battle against him, (as indeed that in the vineyard,
which is not for him, is against him,) he will tread
them down, and burn them; but otherwise, "If I
am angry with my people, they know what course
to take; let them humble themselves, and pray, and
seek my face, and so take hold of my strength with
a sincere desire to make their peace with me, and I
will be reconciled to them, and all shall be well." God sees the sins of his people, and is dis-
pleased with them; but, upon their repentance, he
turns away his wrath.
This may very well be construed as a summary
of the doctrine of the gospel, with which the church
is to be watered every moment. (1.) Here is a
quarrel supposed between God and man; for here
is a battle fought between the God of Israel's fa-
ances, and God himself. It is an old quarrel, ever since sin first entered; it is, on
God's part, a righteous quarrel, but, on man's part,
must unrighteous. (2.) Here is a gracious invitation
given us to make up this quarrel, and to get
these matters in variance accommodated; "Let
him that is desirous to be at peace with God, take
hold on his strength, on his strong arm, which is
lifted up against the enemy, and peace to be made. It is an
argument let him by supplication keep back the stroke; let
him wrestle with me, as Jacob did, resolving not to
let me go without a blessing: and he shall be Israel
—a prince with God." Pardoning mercy is called
the power of our Lord; let him take hold on that.
Christ is the Arm of the Lord, ch. liii. 1. Christ
created God; (Col. i. 15.) and God created Christ; (1.
Cor. i. 24.) let him by a lively faith take hold on him, as a man
that is sinking catches hold of a bough, or cord, or
plank, that is in his reach; or as the malefactor took
hold on the horns of the altar, believing that there
is no other name by which he can be saved, by
which he can be reconciled. (3.) Here is a seven-
fold cord of arguments to persuade us to do this.
[1.] Time and space are given us to do it in, for
fury is not in God; he does not carry it towards us
as great men carry it towards their inferiors. when
the one is in fault, and the other in a fury. Men in
a fury will not take time for consideration; it is,
with them, but a word and a blow. Furious men
are soon implacable, and when they are angry; a little thing provokes them, and no little
thing will pacify them: but it is not so with God;
he considers our frame, is slow to anger, does not
stir up his wrath, nor always chide. [2.] It is in
vain to think of contesting with him. If we persist
in our quarrel with him, and think to make our
part good, it is but like setting briars and thorns
before a consuming fire, which will be so far from
giving check to the progress of it, that they will but
make it burn the more outrageously. We are not
an equal match for Omnipotence. Wo unto him
therefore that strives with his Maker! He knows
not the power of his anger. [3.] This is the only
way, and it is a sure way, to reconciliation; "Let
him take this course to make peace with me, and
I will be reconciled to him, and he shall make peace;
and thereby good, and thereby peace shall come unto him." God is willing to be re-
conciled to us, if we be but willing to be reconciled to him.
3. That the church of God in the world shall be
a growing body, and come at length to be a great
body; (v. 6.) In times to come, (so some read it,) in
gladd-times, and ever they that these evenings are over.
in the days of the gospel, the latter days, he shall
cause Jacob to take root, deeper root than ever yet;
for the gospel-church shall be more firmly fixed
than ever the Jewish church was, and shall spread
further. Or, He shall cause them of Jacob, that
come back out of their captivity, or, as we read it,
them that came of Jacob, to take root downward,
and bear fruit upward, ch. xxxvii. 31. They shall
be established in a prosperous state, and then they
shall blossom and bud, and give hopeful prospects
of a great increase; and so it shall prove, for they
shall fill the face of the world with fruit. Many
shall be brought into the church, proselytes shall be
numerous; some out of all the nations about, that
shall be to the God of Israel for a name and a praise:
and the Gentiles shall be taught the fruits of
righteousness; the preaching of the gospel brought
forth fruit in all the world, (Col. i. 6.) fruit that
remains, John xv. 16.

7. Hath he smitten him, as he smote those
that smote him? or is he slain according to
the slaughter of them that are slain by him?
8. In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou
will debate with it: he stayeth his rough
wind in the day of the east wind. 9. By
this, therefore, shall the majesty of Jacob be
purged; and this is all the fruit to take away
his sin; when he maketh all the stones of the
altar as chalk-stones that are beaten in
sunder, the groves and images shall not stand
up. 10. Yet the defended city shall be
desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left
like a wilderness: there shall the calf feed,
and there shall he lie down, and consume the
branches thereof. 11. When the boughs
thereof are withered, they shall be broken
off: the women come and set them on fire
for it is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them will show them no favour. 12. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. 13. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

Here is the prophet again singing of mercy and judgment, not, as before, judgment to the enemies, and mercy to the church; but judgment to the church, and mercy mixed with that judgment.

1. Here is judgment threatened even to Jacob and Israel; they shall blossom and bud, v. 6. But, 1. They shall be smitten and slain; (v. 7.) some of them shall. If God finds any thing amiss among them, he shall lay them under the tokens of his displeasure for it. Judgment shall begin at the house of God, and he that has had to do with all the families of the earth, he will punish in the first place. 2. Jerusalem, their defended city, shall be desolate, v. 10, 11. God having tried a variety of methods with them for their reformation, which, as to many, have proved ineffectual, he will for a time lay their country waste, which was accomplished when Jeru-

salem was destroyed by the Chaldeans; then that judgment was for a long time foresaken. If lesser judgments do not do the work, God will send greater: for, when he judges, he will overcome. Jerusalem had been a defended city, not so much by art or nature, as by grace and the divine protection; but when God was provoked to withdraw, her De-

defence was departed from her, and she then was left like a wilderness. And in the pleasant gardens of Jerusalem cattle shall feed, shall lie down there, and there shall be none to disturb them away there, they shall be levant and cou-

chant,* and they shall eat the tender branches of the fruit-trees; which perhaps further signifies that the people should become an easy prey to their ene-

mies; when the boughs thereof are withered as they grow upon the tree, being blasted by winds and frosts, and not pruned, they shall be broken off for fuel, and the women and children shall come and set them on fire. There shall be a total destruction, for the very trees shall be destroyed. And this is a figure of the deplorable state of the vineyard, (v. 2.) when it brought forth wild grapes; (ch. v. 2.) and our Saviour seems to refer to this, when he says of the branches of the vine which abide not in him, that they are cast forth and withered, and men gather them, John xv. 6.) which was in a particular manner fulfilled in the unbelieving Jews.

The similitude is explained in the following words; It is a people of no understanding, brutish and set-

tish, and destitute of the knowledge of God, and that have no relish or savour of divine things, like a wilder branch that has no sap in it; and this is at the bottom of all their sins, for which God left them desolate, their idolatry first, and afterward their infidelity. Wicked people, however in other things they may be wits and politicians, in their greatest concerns are of no understanding; and their

* A law phrase, applicable when cattle have been so long in one man's ground, that they have him down, and are risen up to feed. — Eo.
their deserts, v. 8. He will deal out afflictions to them, as the wise physician prescribes medicines to his patient, just such a quantity of each ingredient, or orders how much blood shall be taken when a vein is opened: thus God orders the troubles of his people, not suffering them to be tempted above what they are able, 1 Cor. x. 13. He measures out their afflictions by a little at a time, that they may not be pressed above measure; for he knows their frame, and corrects in judgment, and does not stir up all his wrath. When the affliction is shooting forth, when he is sending it out, and giving it its commission, then he debates in measure, and not in extremity; he considers what weight he will deal forth; when he makes his burden; and when he proceeds in his controversy, so that it is the day of his east-wind, which is not only blustering and noisy, but blasting and noxious, yet he stays his rough wind, checks it, and sets bounds to it, does not suffer it to blow so hard as it was feared: when he is winnowing his corn, it is with a gentle gale, that shall only blow away the chaff, but not the good corn. God has the winds at his command, and every affliction under his check; Hitherto it shall go, but no further. Let us not despair when things are at the worst; be the winds ever so rough, ever so high, God can say unto them, Peace, be still.

5. Though God will afflict them, yet he will make their afflictions to work for the good of their souls, and correct them as the father does the child, to drive out the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts; (v. 9.) By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged. This is the design of the affliction, to this it is adapted as a proper means, and, by the grace of God working with it, it shall have this blessed effect; it shall mortify the habits of sin; by this the earth is made to bring forth its fruit by the east-wind; it shall break them off from the practice of it; this is all the fruit, this is it that God intends, this is all the harm it will do them, to take away their sin; than which they could not have a greater kindness done them, though it be at the expense of an affliction. Therefore, because the affliction is mitigated and moderated, and the rough wind stayed, therefore we may conclude that he designs their reformation, not their destruction: and because he deals thus gently with us, we should therefore study to answer his ends in afflicting us. The particular sin which the affliction was intended to cure them of, was, the sin of idolatry, the sin which did most easily beset that people, and to which they were strangely addicted. Ephraim is joined to idols. But by the captivity in Babylon they were not only weaned from this sin, but set against it. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? Jacob then has his sin taken away, his beloved sin, when he makes all the stones of the altar, of his idolatrous altar, the stones of which were precious and sacred to him, as chalk-stones that are beaten in sundry; he not only has them in contempt, and values them as no stone, but he has them as an indignation at them, and, in a holy revenge, beats them asunder as easily as chalk-stones are broken to pieces; the groves and the images shall not stand before this penitent, but they shall be thrown down too, never to be set up again. This was according to the law for the destroying and destroying of all the monuments of idolatry; (Deut. vii. 5.) according to this promise the idolatry in Babylon no people in the world have such a rooted aversion to idols and idolatry as the people of the Jews.

Note, The design of affliction is to part between us and sin, especially that which has been our own iniquity; and then it appears that the affliction has done us good, when we keep at a distance from the occasions of sin, and use all needful precaution that we may not only not relapse into it, but not so much as be tempted to it, Ps. cxxix. 67.

4. Though Jerusalem shall be desolate and forsaken for a time, yet there will come a day when its scattered friends shall resort to it again out of all the countries whither they were dispersed; (v. 12, 13.) though the body of the nation is abandoned as a people of no understanding, yet those that are indeed children of Israel shall be gathered together again as the sheep of the flock, when the shepherds that scattered them are reckoned with, Ezek. xxxiv. 10—12. Now observe concerning these scattered Israelites, (1.) From whence they shall be fetched; the Lord shall gather them from the land of their captivity, from the land of their pursuit, or beat them out as corn out of the ear; he shall find them out, and separate them from those whom they dwell among, and with whom they seemed to be incorporated, from the channel of the river Euphrates north-east, unto Nile the stream of Egypt, which lay south-west; those that were driven into the land of Assyria, and were captives there in the land of their enemies, where they were ready to perish for want of necessaries, and ready to despair of deliverance; and those that were outcasts in the land of Egypt, whither many of those that were left behind, after the captivity into Babylon, went, contrary to God's express command, (Jer. xxxii. 6, 7.) and there lived as outcasts: God has mercy in store for them all, and will make it to appear, that though they were fetched out of Egypt, yet they shall be fetched back from Egypt, and In what manner they shall be brought back; "Ye shall be gathered one by one, not in multitudes, not in troops forcing your way; but silently, and as it were by stealth, dropping in, first one, and then another." This intimates that the remnant that shall be saved, consists but of few, and those saved with difficulty, and so as by fire, scarcely saved; they shall be fetched out, and brought up to God's table, thus stirred up every man's spirit. (3.) By what means they shall be gathered together; The great trumpet shall be blown, and then they shall come. Cyrus's proclamation of liberty to the captives is this great trumpet, which awakened the Jews that were asleep in their slumber to bestir themselves; it was like the sounding of the jubilee-trumpet, which published the year of release: this is applicable also to the preaching of the gospel, by which sinners are gathered in to the grace of God, such as were outcasts and ready to perish; those that were afar off are made nigh; the gospel proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord. It is applicable also to the archangel's trumpet at the last day, by which saints shall be gathered to the glory of God, that lay as outcasts in their graves. (4.) For what end they shall be gathered together, to worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem. When the captives rallied again, and returned to their own land, the chief thing they had their eye upon, and the first thing they applied themselves to, was, the worship of God; the holy temple was in ruins, but they had the holy mount, the place of the altar, Gen. xiii. 4. Liberty to worship God is the sum of all their desires and the peace of their souls; and, after restriints and dispersions, a free access to his house should be more welcome to us than a free access to our own houses. These that are gathered by the sounding of the gospel-trumpet, are brought in to worship God, and added to the church, and the great trumpet of all will gather the saints together, to serve God day and night in his temple.

CHAP. XXVIII.

In this chapter, I. The Ephraimites are reproved and threatened for their pride and drunkenness, their security and sensuality, v. 1—8. But, in the midst of this, there is a great promissory remission of the sins of the people of God by the covenant of grace, v. 9, 10. II. They are likewise reproved and threatened for their dullness and stupidity, unaptness to profit by the instructions which the pro-
unto the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine! 2. Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which, as a tempest of hail, and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. 3. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet. 4. And the glorious beauty which is on the head of the fat valley shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer; which, when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up. 5. In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people; 6. And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate. 7. But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way: the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. 8. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.

Here, 1. The prophet warns the kingdom of the ten tribes, of the judgments that were coming upon them for their sins, which were so soon after executed by the king of Assyria, who laid their country waste, and carried the people into captivity. Ephraim had his name from fruitfulness, their soil being very fertile, and the products of it abundant, and the best of the kind; they had a vast, and great, and pleasant land, (v. 1, 4.) and Samaria, which was situated on a hill, was, as it were, on the head of the fat valleys; their country was rich and pleasant, and as the garden of the Lord: it was the glory of Canaan, as that was the glory of all lands: their harvest and vintage were the glorious beauty on the head of their valleys, which were covered over with corn and wine. 2. What an ill use they made of their plenty: what God gave them to serve him with, they perverted, and abused, by making it the food and fuel of their lusts. 3. They were puffed up with pride by it; the goodness with which God crowned their years, which should have been to him a crown of praise, was to them a crown of pride. They that are rich in the world, are not to be high-minded, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Their king who were the crown, was proud that he ruled over so rich a country: Samaria, their royal city, was no place for pride. Perhaps it was usual at their festivals, or revellings, to dress their table made up of flowers and ears of corn, which they wore, in honour of their fruitful country. Pride was a sin that generally prevailed among them, and therefore the prophet, in his name who resists the proud, boldly proclaims a Vb to the crown of pride. If those who wear crowns be proud of them, let them pour salt upon that: and, in this way: What men are proud of, be it ever so mean, is to them a crown; a crown that is proud thinks himself as great as a king: but wo to those who thus exalt themselves, for they shall be abused; their pride is the precursor to their destruction. 2. They indulged themselves in sensuality; Ephraim was notorious for drunkenness, and excess of wine: Samaria, the head of the fat valleys, was full of those that were overcome with wine: were broken with it, so the margin. See how foolish drunkards act, and no marvel, when, in the very commission of the sin, they make fools and brutes of themselves; they yield, [1.] To be conquered by the sin; it overcomes them, and brings them into bondage, (2 Pet. ii. 19.) they are led captive by it, and the captivity is the more shameful and glorious, as it is voluntary, and shows that they have themselves owned that there is not a greater drudgery in the world than hard drinking. They are overcome not with the wine, but with the love of it. [2.] To be ruined by it: they are broken by wine; their constitution is broken by it, and their health ruined; they are broken in their callings and estates, and their families are brought to ruin by it; their peace with God is broke; and they are in danger of being eternally undone, and all this for the gratification of a base lust. Wo to these drunkards of Ephraim! Ministers must bring the general woes of the word home to particular places and persons. We must say, Wo to drunkards; their condition is a woful condition, their brash pleasures are to be pitted, and not envied; they shall not inherit the kingdom of God, (1 Cor. vi. 10.) the curse is in force against them, Deut. xxiii. 19. Nay, we must go further, and say, Wo to the drunkards of such a place; that they may hear and fear; and, Wo to this or that person, if he be a drunkard. There is a particular wo to the drunkards of Ephraim, for they are of God's professing people, and it becomes them worse than any other they know better; and therefore should give a better example. Some make the crown of pride to belong to the drunkards, and to mean the garlands with which they were crowned, that got the victory in their wicked drinking-matches, and drank down the rest of the company; they were proud of being mighty to drink wine; but wo to them who thus glory in their shame. The pride of God in taking away their plenty from them, which they thus abused. "Their glorious beauty, the plenty they were proud of, is but a fading flower, it is meat that perishes. The most substantial fruits, if God blast them, and blow upon them, are but fading flowers, v. 1. God can easily take away their corn in the season thereof, (Hos. ii. 8.) and recover locum vastatum—ground that has been alienated from us: it is his, which he prepared for Baal. God has an officer ready to make a seizure for him, he's one at his beck, a mighty and strong one, who is able to do the business, even the king of Assyria, who shall cast down to the earth with the hand, shall easily and effectually, and with the turn of a hand, destroy all that which they are proud of, and pleased with, v. 2. He shall throw it down to the ground.
be broken to pieces with a strong hand, with a hand that they cannot oppose. Then the crown of pride, and the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under foot; (v. 3.) they shall be exposed to contempt, and shall not be able to recover themselves. Drunkards, in their folly, are apt to talk proudly, and taunt themselves most then when they most shame themselves; but they render themselves the more ridiculous by it. The beauty of their valleys, which they gloated in, will be, (1.) Like a fading flower; (as before, v. 1.) it will wither of itself, and has in itself the principles of its own corruption; it will perish in time by its own moth and rust. (2.) Like the hasty wheat, which as soon as it is discovered, is plucked and eaten up; so the wealth of this world, beside that it is apt to decay of itself, is subject to be devoured by others, as greedily as the first ripe fruit, which is earnestly desired, Mic. vii. 1. Thieves break through and steal. The harvest which the wretched is proud of the hungry eat up; (Job. v. 5.) no sooner do they see the prey, but they catch at it, and swallow up all they can lay their hands on. It is likewise easily devoured, as that fruit which, being ripe before it is grown, is very small, and is soon eaten up; and there being little of it, and that of little worth, it is not reserved, but used immediately.

11. He next turns himself to the kingdom of Judah, whom he calls the residue of his people, (v. 5.) for they are the only remnants of Israel that derived from the house of David.

1. He promises them God's favours, and that they should be taken under his guidance and protection, when the beauty of Ephraim shall be left exposed to be trodden down and eaten up, v. 5, 6. In that day, when the Assyrian army is laying Israel waste, and Judah might think that their neighbour's house was going on free, in the day of their down and perplexity, then God will be to the residue of his people all they need, and can desire; not only to the kingdom of Judah, but to those of Israel, who had kept their integrity, and, as was, probably, the case with some, betook themselves to the land of Judah, to be sheltered by good king Hezekiah. When the Assyrian, that mighty one, was in Israel as a tempest of hail, noisy and butttering, as a destroying storm bearing down all before it, especially at sea, and as a flood of mighty waters overflowing the country, (v. 2.) then in that day will the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, distinguish by peculiar favours his people who have distinguished themselves by a steady and singular adherence to him, and that which they most need he will give them. This he shall do by a manifold display of the worth of the promises, that God, covenanting to be to his people a God all-sufficient, undertakes to be himself all that to them that they can desire. (1.) He will put all the credit and honour upon them, which are requisite, not only to rescue them from contempt, but to gain them esteem and reputation. He will be to them a crown of glory, and four crown of glory. He will be to them the throne of pride looked upon God's people with disdain, and trampled upon them, and they were the song of the drunkards of Ephraim; but God will so appear for them by his providence, as to make it evident that they have the favour toward them, and that shall be to them a crown of glory; for what greater glory can any people have, than for God to make them as his own? He will throw them all in grace, as to make it evident that they have their image renewed on them, and that shall be to them a diadem of beauty: for what greater beauty can any person have than the beauty of holiness? Note, Those that have God for their God, have him for a Crown of glory, and a Diadem of beauty; for they are made to him kings and priests. (2.) He will give them all the wisdom and grace necessary to the due discharge of the duty of their place. He will himself be a Spirit of judgment to them that sit in judgment; the privy-councillers shall be guided by wisdom and discretion, and the judges govern by justice and equity. It is a great mercy to any people, when those that are called to places of power and public trust are qualified for their places; when those that sit in judgment have a spirit of judgment, a spirit of government. (3.) He will give them all the courage and boldness requisite to carry them resolutely through the difficulties and oppositions they are likely to meet with. He will be for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate, to the enemy of the enemy whose cities they besiege, or their own gates, when they sally out upon the enemies that besiege them. The strength of the soldier depends as much upon God as the wisdom of the magistracy; and where God gives both these, he is to that people a Crown of glory. This may well be supposed to refer to Christ, and so the Chaldee Paraphrase understands it; in that day shall Messiah be a Crown of glory; Simeon calls him the Glory of his people Israel; and he is made of God to us Wisdom, Righteousness, and Strength.

2. He complains of the corruptions that were found among them, and the many corrupt ones; (v. 7.) But they also, many of them of Judah, have erred through wine. There are drunkards of Jerusalem, as well as drunkards of Ephraim; and God foretells that both shall be distasteful to him, but he is more amerced, that he has not blasted the glory of Judah, as he has done that of Ephraim. Sparing mercy lavs us under peculiar obligations, when it is thus distinguishing. Ephraim's sins are found in Judah, and yet not Ephraim's ruins. They have erred through wine; their drinking to excess is the occasion of a practical error; they are so soon taken in by it, that they have no time for their judgment, and so put a cheat upon themselves; they think to preserve their health by it, and help digestion, but they spoil their constitution, and hasten diseases and deaths. And it is the occasion of a great many errors in principle; their understanding is clouded, and conscience debouched, by it; and therefore, to support themselves in it, they excuse corrupt actions, and then their errors are a favour of their hosts. Probably, some were drawn in to worship idols by their love of the wine and strong drink, which there was plenty of at their idolatrous festivities; and so they erred through wine, as Israel, for love of the daughters of Moab, joined themselves to Baal-peor. Three things are here observed as aggravations of this sin.

(1.) That those were guilty of it, whose business it was to warn others against it, and to teach them better, and therefore who ought to have set a better example; The priest and the prophet are swallowed up of wine; their office is quite drowned and lost in it. The priests, as sacrificers, were obliged by a particular law to be temperate, (Lev. x. 9.) and this was their ruin. The thirst of pride looked upon God's people with disdain, and trampled upon them, and they were the song of the drunkards of Ephraim; but God will so appear for them by his providence, as to make it evident that they have their favour toward them, and that shall be to them a crown of glory; for what greater glory can any people have, than for God to make them as his own? He will throw them all in grace, as to make it evident that they have their image renewed on them, and that shall be to them a diadem of beauty: for what greater beauty can any person have than the beauty of holiness? Note, Those that have God for their God, have him for a Crown of glory, and a Diadem of beauty; for they are made to him kings and priests. (2.) That the consequences of it were very pernicious, not only by the ill influence of their example, but the prophet, when he was drunk, erred in vision; the false prophets plainly discovered themselves to be so, when they were in drink. The priest stumbled in judgment, and forgot the law; (Prov. xxxi. 5.) he reeled and staggered as much in the operations of his mind as in the motions of
his body. What wisdom or justice can be expected from those that sacrifice reason, and virtue, and conscience, and all that is valuable, to such a base lust as the love of strong drink is? Happy art thou, O land, when thy princes eat and drink for refreshment, and not for drunkenness. Eccl. x. 17.

(2.) That the disease was epidemic, and the generality of those that kept any thing of a table, were infected with it; All tables are full of vomit, v. 8. See what an odious thing the sin of drunkenness is, what an affront it is to human societies; it is rude and ill-mannered, enough to sicken the beholders; for the time, where they eat their meat, is here stigmatized with the marks of this sin, which the sinners declare as Sodom; their tables are full of vomit. So that the victor, instead of being proud of his crown, ought rather to be ashamed of it. It bodes ill to any people, when so settish a sin as drunkenness is, becomes national.

9. Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. 10. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: For with stammering lips, and another tongue, will he speak to this people. 12. To whom he said, This is the rest where with ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. 13. But the word of the Lord was unto them, precept upon precept, precept upon precept: line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken. The prophet here complains of the wretched stupidity of this people, that they were unteachable, and made no improvement of the means of grace which they enjoyed; they still continued as they were; their mistake is not rectified, their hearts not touched, their minds not enlightened. 1. What it was that their prophets and ministers designed and aimed at; it was to teach them knowledge, the knowledge of God and his will, and to make them understand doctrine, v. 9. This is God's way of dealing with men, to enlighten men's minds first with the knowledge of his truth, and thus to gain their affections, and bring their wills into a compliance with his laws; thus he enters in by the door, whereas the thief and robber climb up another way.

II. What method they took, in pursuance of this design; they left no means untried, to do them good, but taught them as children are taught, little children that are beginning to learn, that are taken from the breast to the book; (v. 9.) for among the Jews it was common for mothers to nurse their children till they were three years old, and almost ready to go to school. And it is good to begin times with children, to teach them, as they are capable, the good knowledge of the Lord, and to instruct them, even when they are but newly weaned from the milk. The prophets taught them as children are taught, for—

1. They were constant and industrious in teaching them; they took great pains with them, and with great prudence, teaching them as they needed it, and were able to bear it; (v. 10.) Precept upon precept. It must be so, or, as some read it, I have been so. They have been taught, as children are taught to read, by precept upon precept, and taught to write, by line upon line; a little here, and a little there, a little of one thing, and a little of another, that the variety of instructions might be pleasing and inviting; a little at a time. 13. But they, nevertheless, that they might not have their memories overcharged; a little from one prophet, and a little from another, that every one might be pleased with his friend, and him he admired. Note, For in instruction in the things of God, it is requisite that we have precept upon precept, and line upon line: that one line and one precept should be followed; and so enforced, by another, that precept of justice must be upon the precept of piety, and the precept of charity upon that of justice. Nay, it is necessary that the same precept and the same line should be often repeated, and inculcated upon us; that we may the better understand them, and the more easily recollect them when we have occasion for them. Teachers should accommodate themselves to the capacity of the learners, give them what they most need, and can best bear; and a little at a time. 2. They accosted them in a kind manner, v. 12. God, by his prophets, said to them, This way that we are directing you to, and directing you in, it is the rest, the only rest, where with you may cause the weary to rest; and this will be the refreshing of your own souls, and will bring rest to your country from the wars and other calamities with which it has been oppressed; except the Lord, except he calls us to nothing but what is really for our own advantage; for the service of God is the only true rest for those that are weary of the service of sin, and there is no refreshing but under the easy yoke of the Lord Jesus.

III. What little effect all this had upon the people; they were as unapt to learn as young children newly weaned from the milk, and it was impossible to fasten any thing upon them; (v. 9.) nay, one would choose rather to teach a child of two years old than undertake to teach them: for they have not only (like such a child) no capacity to receive what is taught them, but they are prejudiced against it. As children, they have need of milk, and cannot bear strong meat, Heb. v. 12. I. They would not hear, (v. 12. &c.) not that which would be delicious and refreshing to the soul, but they would not hear it; the word of God commanded their serious attention, but could not gain it; they were where it was preached, but they turned a deaf ear to it, or, as it came in at one ear, it went out at the other. 2. They would not heed; it was unto them fire. The word of God was given to them, and it was continually sounding in their ears; but that was all, it made no impression upon them: they had the letter of the precept, but no experience of the power and spirit of it; it was continually beating upon them, but it beat nothing into them. Nay, 3. It should seem, they ridiculed the prophet's preaching, and bantered it; the word of the Lord was to them as the word of a Prophet in the original it is in rhyme: they made a song of the prophet's words, and sang it when they were merry over their wine; David was the song of the drunkenards. It is great impolicy, and a high affront to God, thus to make a jest of sacred things; to speak of that vainly which should make us serious.

IV. How severely God would reckon with them for this; 1. He would deprive them of the privilege of plain preaching, and speak to them with stammering lips and another tongue, v. 11. They that will not understand what is plain and level to their capacity...
but despise it as mean and trifling, are justly ansured with that which is above them. Or, God will send foreign armies among them, whose language they understand not, to lay their country waste. Those that will not hear the comfortable voice of God's word, shall be made to hear the dreadful voice of his rod. Or, these words may be taken as denoting God's gracious condescension to their capacity in his dealing with them; he lied to them in their own language, as nurses do to their children, with stammering lips to put our thought, he changed his voice, tried first one way, and then another; the apostle quotes it as a favour, (1 Cor. xiv. 21.) applying it to the gift of tongues, and complaining that yet for all this they would not hear.

2. He would bring utter ruin upon them; by their profane contempt of God and his word they are but hastening on their own ruin, and ripening themselves for it; it is that they may go and fall backward, may grow worse and worse, may depart further and further from God, and proceed from one sin to another, till they be quite broken, and snared, and taken, and ruined, v. 15. They have here a little, and there a little, of the word of God; they think it too much, and say to the seers, See not; but it proves to them, and will prove enough to condemn them. If it be not a savour of life unto life, it will be a savour of death unto death.

14. Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem: 15. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell we are at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves. 16. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. 17. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. 18. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. 19. From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning it shall pass over, by day and by night; and it shall be a tokens only to understand the report. 20. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. 21. For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Peraim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act. 22. Now, therefore, be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts a consumption, even determined, upon the whole earth.

The prophet, having reproved those that made a jest of the word of God, here goes on to reprove that which made a jest of the judgments of God, and set them at nought for lies and falsehood, and will not suffer either his ordinances or his judgments to be brought into contempt. He addresses himself to the scornful men who ruled in Jerusalem, who were the magistrates of the city, v. 14. It is bad with a people, when their thrones of judgment become the seats of the scornful, when rulers are scorners; but that the rulers of Jerusalem should be made a jest of for false words, that they should mock light of God's judgments, and scorn to take notice of the tokens of his displeasure, is very sad. Who will be mourners in Zion, if they are scorners? Observe,

I. How these scornful men bullied themselves asleep in carnal security, and even challenged God Almighty to do his worst; (v. 15.) ye have said, We have made a covenant with death and the grave. They thought themselves as secure of their lives, even then when the most destroying judgments were abroad, as if they had made a bargain with death, upon a valuable consideration, not to take them away by any violence, but by old age. If we be at peace with God, and have made a covenant with him, we have in effect, made a covenant with death, and it shall be so. And when the fittest time, that, whenever it comes, it shall be no terror to them, though they may in any real damage; death is ours, if we be Christ's: (1 Cor. ii. 22.) but to think of making death our friend, or being in league with it, while by sin we are making God our enemy, and are at war with him, is the greatest absurdity that can be. It was a fond conceit which these scorners had, _When the overflowing scourge shall pass through our country, and others shall fall under it, yet it shall not come to us, nor reach us, though it extend far, not bear us down, though it is an overflowing scourge._ It is the greatest folly imaginable for impudent sinners to think that either in this world or the other they shall fare better than their neighbours. But what is the ground of their confidence? Why, truly, We have made lies our refuge. Either,

1. Those things which the prophets told them, would be lies and falsehood to them, and would deceive, though they themselves looked upon them as substantial fences. The protection of their idols, the promises with which their false prophets soothed them, their policy, their wealth, their interest in the people; these they confided in, and not in God; nay, these they confided in against God. Or, 2. These things which they believeth, lies and falsehoods; for, the enemy, who was flagellum Dei—the scourge of God, the overwhelming scourge; they would secure themselves by imposing upon the enemy with their stratagems of war, or their signed submissions in treaties of peace. The rest of the cities of Judah were taken because they made an obstinate defence, but the rulers of Jerusalem hope to succeed better, they think their stratagems are as good as the soldiers of the country towns; they will compliment the king of Assyria with a promise to surrender their city, or to become tributaries to him, with a purpose at the same time to shake off his yoke as soon as the danger is over, not caring though they be found liars to him; as the expression is, Deut. xxiv. 29. They be liars. Those put a cheat upon themselves, that this shall go to make a base cheating upon those they deal with. Those that pursue their designs by trick and fraud, by mean and paltry shifts, may perhaps compass them, but cannot expect comfort in them. Honesty is the best policy. But such refinches as are they driven to that depart from God, and throw themselves out of his protection.

II. How God, by the prophet, awakens them out of this sleep, and shows them the folly of their security,
1. He tells them upon what grounds they might be secure; do not disturb their false confidences, till he has first showed them a firm bottom on which they have no proper support themselves. (v. 10.) Behold I lay in Zion a foundation, a stone. This foundation is, (1.) The promises of God in general; his word, upon which he has caused his people to hope; his covenant with Abraham, that he would be a God to him and his; this is a foundation, a foundation of stone, firm and lasting, for faith to build upon; it is a tried stone, for all the saints have stability and security by the same. (2.) The promise of Christ in particular, for to him this is expressly applied in the New Testament, 1 Pet. ii. 6-8. He is that Stone which is become the Head of the corner. The great promise of the Messiah and his kingdom, which was to begin at Jerusalem, was sufficient to make God's people easy in the worst of times; for they knew well that till he was come, the sanctuary should not depart from Judah. Zion shall continue while this Foundation is yet to be laid there. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, for the comfort of those that dare not make lies their refuge; "Behold, and look upon me, as one that has undertaken to lay in Zion a Stone." Jesus Christ is a Foundation of God's laying; this is the Lord's doing. He is laid in Zion, in the church, in its foundation, in its head-stone, a Stone of the highest perfection, so some; a Touch-stone that shall distinguish between true and counterfeit. He is a precious Stone, for such are the foundations of the New Jerusalem; (Rev. xxi. 19.) a Corner-stone, in whom the sides of the building are united; the Head-stone of the corner. And he that believes these promises, and rests upon them, shall not make haste, shall not run to and fro in a hurry, as men at their wit's end, shall not be shifting here and there for his own safety, nor be driven to his feet by any terrors, as the wicked man is said to be, (Job xlviii. 11.) but with a fixed heart shall quietly wait the event, saying, Welcome the will of God. He shall not make haste, in his expectations, so as to anticipate the time set in the divine counsels, but, though it tarry, will wait the appointed hour, knowing that he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. He that believes will not make haste than good speed, but he satisfied that God's time is the best time, and wait with patience for it. The apostle, from the LXX. explains this, (1 Pet. ii. 6.) He that believes on him shall not be confounded; his expectations shall not be frustrated, but far outdone.

2. He tells them upon the grounds which they now built on, they could not be safe, but their confidences would certainly fail them; (v. 17.) Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet. This denotes, (1.) The building up of his church, having laid the foundation, (v. 16.) he will raise the structure, as builders do, by line and plummet, Zech. iv. 10. Righteousness shall be the plumb-line, and the preacher being founded on Christ, shall be formed and reformed by the scripture, the standing rule of judgment and righteousness. Judgment shall return unto righteousness, Ps. xciv. 15. Or, (2.) The punishing of the church's enemies, against whom he will proceed in strict justice, according to the threatenings of the law; he will give them their deserts, and in exact proportion to the work he will do. The church is often charged with the work of God as the righteous Judge of the earth. Suddenly, He will do it now against his people, as formerly he did it against their enemies; by which his justice will appear to be impartial; he will now rise up against Jerusalem, as, in David's time against the Philistines in mount Perazim, (2 Sam. xx. 20.) and as, in Joshua's time, against the Canaanites in the valley of Gilboa. If those that profess themselves members of God's church, by their pride and
13th. This will be his strange work, his strange act, his foreign deed: it is work that he is backward to, he rather delights in showing mercy, and does not afflict willingly: it is work that he is not used to; as his own people, he protects and favours them; it is a strange work indeed, if he turn to be their enemy, and fight against them: (ch. xiii. 10.) it is a work that all the neighbours will stand amazed at; (Deut. xxxix. 24.) and therefore the ruins of Jerusalem are said to be an astonishment, Jer. xxxvi. 19. Lastly, We have the use and application of all this; (v. 22.) "Therefore he ye not mockers; dare not to ridicule either the reproofs of God's word, or the approaches of his judgments." Mocking the messengers of the Lord was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin. The consideration of the judgments of God that are coming upon hypocritical professors, should effectually silence mockers, and make them serious; "Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong; both the bands by which you are bound under the dominion of sin," (for there is little hope of the conversion of mockers;) "and the bands by which you are bound over to the judgments of God." God has bands of justice strong enough to hold those that break all the bonds of his law in subjection, and cast away all his cords from them. Let not our mockers make light of divine judgments, for the prophet (who is one of those with whom the secret of the Lord is) assures them that the Lord God of hosts has, in his hearing, determined a consumption upon the whole earth; and can they think to escape? Or shall their unbelief invalidate the threatening? 23. Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. 24. Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? 25. When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat, and the appointed barley, and the rye, in their place? 26. For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him. 27. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. 28. Bread-corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horses. 29. This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. This parable, which (as many of our Saviour's parables) is borrowed from the husbandman's calling; is ushered in with a solemn preface, designating attention. The word to hear, let him hear, and understand, v. 23. 1. The parable here is plain enough, that the husbandman applies himself to the business of his calling with a great deal of pains and prudence, secundum artem—according to rule, and, as his judgment directs him, observes a method and order in his work. 1. In his ploughing and sowing; Does the ploughman plough all day to sow? Yes, he does, and he ploughs in hope, and sows in hope, 1 Cor. ix. 10. Does he open and break the clods? Yes, he does, that it may be fit to receive the seed. And when he has thus made plain the face thereof, does he not sow his seed, seed suitable to the soil? For the husbandman knows what grain is fit for chary ground, and what for sandy ground, and accordingly he sows each in its place; wheat in the fruitful place, (so the margin reads it;) for it is the principal grain, and was a staple-commodity of Canaan, (Ezek. xxvii. 17;) and barley in the appointed place. The wisdom and goodness of the God of nature are to be observed in this, that, to oblige his creatures with a grateful variety of productions, he has suited them to each a proper place; wheat in the fruitful place; barley in the sandy place. This also applies proper to the grain that is to be threshed out; the fitches and the cummin, being easily got out of their husk or ear, are only threshed with a staff and a rod; but the bread-corn requires more force, and therefore that must be bruised with a threshing instrument, a sledge shod with iron, that was drawn to and fro over it, to beat out the corn; and yet he will not be ever threshing it, nor any longer than is necessary to loosen the corn from the chaff; he will not break it, or crush it into the ground with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it to pieces with his horses; the grinding of it is reserved for another operation. Observe, by the way, what pains are to be taken, not only for the earning, but for the preparing of our necessary victual; the husbandman himself is not a spare, bread-corn is bruised; Christ was; it pleased the Lord to bruise him, that he might be the Bread of life to us. 2. The interpretation of the parable is not so plain. Most interpreters make it a further answer to those who see the judgment of God as due to them; "Let them know that as the husbandman will not be always ploughing, but will at length sow his seed, so God will not be always threatening, but will at length execute his threatenings, and bring upon sinners the judgments they have deserved; but in wisdom, and in proportion to their strength, that they may not have too much, but reformed, and brought to repentance, by them." But observe, this parable a greater latitude in the exposition of it. 1. In general; that God, who gives the husbandman this wisdom, is, doubtless, himself infinitely wise. It is God that instructs the husbandman to discretion, as his God, v. 26. Husbandmen have need of discretion, where with to order their affairs, and ought not to undertake that business unless they do in some measure understand it; and if they should by observation and experience endeavour to improve themselves in the knowledge of it. Since the king himself is served of the field, the advancing of the art of husbandry is a common service to mankind, more than the cultivating of most other arts. The skill of the husbandman is from God, as every good and perfect gift is from above. This is thinking of the weight and terror of the sentence passed on the earth for sin, that when God, in execution of it, sent man to till the ground, he taught him how to do it most to his advantage, else, in the greatness of his folly, he might have been for ever filling the sand of the sea, labouring to no purpose. It is he that give men capacity for this, by an inclination to it, and a delight in it; and if some were not by evidence cut out for it, and made to rejoice, as Issachar, that tribe of husbandmen, in their tents, notwithstanding the toil and fatigue of this business, we should soon want the supports of life. If some are more discreet and judicious in managing these or any other affairs than others are, God must be acknowledged to have given them a special qualification, and to have prepared them for this employment; and to him husbandmen must seek for direction in their business; for they, above
other men, have an immediate dependence upon the divine providence. As to the other instance of the man of Barmen, although in this instance, it is said, This one cometh forth from the Lord of hosts. v. 29. Even the plainest dictates of sense and reason must be acknowledged to come forth from the Lord of hosts. And if it is from him that men do things wisely and discretely, we must needs acknowledge him to be wise in counsel, and excellent in working. God’s working is according to his will, he never acts against his will, as men do; he doth, and does not by his ministers break up the fallow ground? Does not the ploughman, when the ground is fitted for the seed, cast in the seed in its proper soil? He does so, and so the great God sows his word by the hand of his ministers, (Matt. xiii. 19.) who are to divide the word of truth, and give every one their portion. Whatever the soil of the heart is, there is some seed of the word prepared for it. Thus the word of God, as the word of God, so the rod of God, is thus wisely made use of. Afflictions are God’s threshing instruments, designed to loosen us from the world, to part between us and our chaff, and to prepare us for use. And as to these, God will make use of them as there is occasion; but he will proportion them to our strength, they shall be no heavier than there is need. If the rod and the staff will answer the end, he will not make use of his cart-wheel and his horseman. And where these are necessary, as for the bruising of the bread-corn, (which will not otherwise he get clean from the straw,) yet he will not be ever threshing it, will not always chide, but his anger shall endure but for a moment; nor will his foot tread under his feet the prisoners of the earth. And herein we must acknowledge him wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.

CHAP. XXIX.

This wo to Ariel, which we have in this chapter, is the same with the burden of the valley of Aijalon, ch. xxviii. 7, 8; and (it is very probable) points at the same event—the besieging of Jerusalem by the Assyrian army, which was cut off there by an angel; yet it is applicable to the destruction of the Chaldean army, by the judgments of the Romans. Here is, I. The event itself foretold, that Jerusalem should be greatly distressed; (v. 1-4, 6.) but that their enemies, who distressed them, should be haled and defeated, v. 4, 7, 8. II. A remarkable punishment to three sorts of sinners: 1. Those that were stupid and regardless of the warnings which the prophet gave them, v. 9. 12. 2. Those that were formal and hypocritical in their religious performances, v. 13. 14. 15. Those profane in their temporal concerns, who compassionately despised God’s providence, and set up their own projects in competition with it, v. 15-17. III. Precious promises of grace and mercy to a distinguishing remnant whom God wouldSave, and in whose name he would be justified when his enemies and persecutors should be cut off, v. 18-24.

I. WO to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices. 2. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel. 3. And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee. 4. And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be as of one that hath a familiar spirit out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust. 5. Moreover, the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly. 6. Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire. 7. And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night-vision. 8. It shall even be as when a hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetit: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion.

That it is Jerusalem which is here called Ariel, is agreed, for that was the city where David dwelt; that part of it which was called Zion, was in a particular manner the city of David, in which both the temple and the palace were; but why it is so called is very uncertain; probably, the name and the reason were, then, well known. Cities, as well as persons, have a name, and a surname. Jerusalem means the lion of God, or the strong lion; as the lion is king among beasts, so was Jerusalem among the cities, giving law to all about her; it was the city of the great king: (Ps. xlvi. 1, 2.) it was the head city of Judah, who is called a lion’s whelp, (Gen. xlix. 9.) and whose ensign was a lion; and he that is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, was the glory of it. Jerusalem was a term sometimes to the adjoining nations, and, while she was a righteous city, was bold as a lion. Some make Ariel to signify the altar of burnt-offerings, which devoured the beasts offered in sacrifice, as the lion does his prey. Wo to that altar in the city where David dwelt; that was destroyed with the temple by the Chaldeans. I rather take it as a wo to Jerusalem, Jerusalem; it is repeated here, as it is Matt. xxiii. 37. that it might be the more awakening. Here is,

I. The distress of Jerusalem foretold; though Jerusalem be a strong city, as a lion, though a holy city, as a lion of God, yet, if iniquity be found there, wo be to it. It was the city where David dwelt; it was he that brought that to it, which was its glory, and which made it a type of the gospel-church, and of Christ’s coming in will of grace and mercy to a distinguishing remnant. This was typical of Christ’s residence in his church. This is mentioned as an aggravation of Jerusalem’s sin, that in it were set both the testimony of Israel, and the throne of the house of David.

1. Let Jerusalem know that her external performance of religious services will not serve as an exemption from the judgments of God; (v. 1.) *Add ye year to year; go on in the road of your annual feasts, let all your males appear there three times a year before the Lord, and none empty, according to the law and custom, and let them never miss any of these solemnities; let them kill the sacrifices, as they used to do, but, as long as their lives are unformed, and their hearts unumbled, let them not think thus to pacify an offended God, and to turn away his wrath.” Note, Hypocrites may be found
in a constant track of devout exercises, and treading around in them, and with these they may flatter themselves, but can never please God, or make their peace with him.

2. Let her know that God is coming forth against her in displeasure, that she shall be visited of the Lord of hosts, (v. 6.) her sins shall be inquired into, and punished; God will reckon with them for terrible judgments, with the frightful alarms and fearul desolations of war, which shall be like thunder and earthquakes, storms and tempests, and devouring fire, especially upon the account of the great noise. When a foreign enemy was not in the borders, but in the bowels of their country, roaring and ravaging, and would intrude, especially such an army as that of the Assyrians, whose commanders were so very insolent, as appears by the conduct of Rab-shakeh, the common soldiers, no doubt, were much more rude; they might see the Lord of these hests visiting them with thunder and storm. Yet this being here said to be a great noise, perhaps it is intimated that they shall be worse frightened than hurt. Particularly,

(1.) Jerusalem shall be besieged, strictly besieged. He does not say, I will destroy Ariel, but, I will distress Ariel; and she is therefore brought into distress, that, being thereby awakened to repent and reform, she may not be brought to destruction; (v. 3.) I will compass against their round about. It was the enemy's army that encamped against it; but God shall be the first to do it, for they are his hand, he does it by them. God had often, and long, by a host of angels, encamped for them round about them, for their protection and deliverance; but now he was turned to be their Enemy, and fought against them. The siege laid against them was of his laying, and the forts raised against them were of his raising. Note, When men fight against us, we must trust in him who fighteth for us.

(2.) She shall be in grief to see the country laid waste, and all the fenced cities of Judah in the enemies' hand; There shall be heaviness and sorrow; so these two words are sometimes rendered. Those that are most merry and jovial, are, commonly, when they come to be in distress, most overwhelmed with heaviness and sorrow, and the bitterness of their woe is turned into mourning. "All Jerusalem shall then be unto me as Ariel, as the altar, with fire upon it, and slain victims about it:" so it was, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans; and many, no doubt, were slain, when it was besieged by the Assyrians. The whole city shall be an altar, in which sinners, falling by the judgments that are abroad, shall be as victims to divine justice. Or thus: There shall be heaviness and sorrow; they shall repent, and reform, and return to God, and then it shall be to me as Ariel. Jerusalem shall be like itself, shall become to me a Jerusalem again, a holy city, ch. i. 26.

(3.) She shall be humbled and mortified, and made submissive; (v. 4.) Thou shalt be brought down from the height of arrogancy and insolence to which thou art come: the proud looks and the proud language shall be brought down by one humbling providence after another. Those that despised God's judgments, shall be humbled by them; for the proudest sinners shall either bend or break before him. They had talked big, had lifted up the horn on high, and had fancied with a stiff neck: (Ps. lxxxv. 3.) but now thou shalt speak out of the ground, out of the dust; as one that has a familiar spirit, whishearing out of the dust. This intimates that they should be faint and feeble, not able to speak up, nor to say all they would say; but, as those who are sick, or whose spirits are ready to fail, their speech shall be low and interrupted; and that they should be fearful, and in consternation, forced to speak low as being afraid lest their enemies should overhear them, and take advantage against them; and that they should be tame, and obliged to submit to the conquerors. When Haz. iiah submitted to the king of Assyria, saying, I have offended, that which thou joust set on me I will bear, (2 Kings xviii. 14.) then his speech was low, out of the dust. God can make those to crouch, that have been most daring, and quite dispirit them.

II. The destruction of Jerusalem's enemies is foretold, for the comfort of all that were her friends and well-wishers in this distress; (v. 5, 7.) Thou shalt be brought down, (v. 4.) to speak out of the ground, out of the dust; so low wilt thou be, as it may be rendered "the multitude of the strong and thy terrible ones, the numerous armies of the enemy, shall themselves be like small dust, not able to speak at all, or so much as whisper, but as chaff that passes away. Thou shalt be abased, but they shall be quite dispersed, smitten and slain after another manner, (ch. xxvii. 7.) they shall pass away, yea, it shall be at an instant, suddenly; the enemy shall be surprised with the destruction, and you with the salvation." The army of the Assyrians was by an angel laid dead upon the spot, in an instant, suddenly. Such will be the destruction of the enemies of the gospel-Jerusalem; in one hour is their judgement come, Rev. xvii. 10. Again, (v. 6.) Thou shalt be visited; or, as it used to be rendered, Thou shalt be visited with thunder and a great noise. Thou shalt be put into a fright which they cannot soon recover. But (v. 7.) the multitude of the nations that fight against her, shall be as a dream of a night-vision; they and their prosperity and success shall soon vanish past recall. The multitude of the nations that fight against Zion, shall be as a hungry man, who dreams that he eats, but still is hungry; to him who wakes, it is a dream. With what shall we make a prey of Jerusalem, and to enrich themselves with the plunder of that opulent city, their hopes shall prove vain dreams, with which their fancies may please and sport themselves for awhile, but they shall be disappointed. They fancied themselves masters of Jerusalem, but shall never be so. 2. They themselves, and all their pomp, and power, are as a thing of nought, as the vision of them one awakes; shall be of as little value, and as short continuance, Ps. lxxxiii. 20. He shall fly away as a dream, Job xx. 8. The army of Sennacherib van ished and was gone quickly, though it had filled the country as a dream fills a man's head; especially as a dream of meat fills the head of him that went to bed hungry.

Many understand these verses as part of the threatening of wrath, when God comes to distress Jerusalem, and lay siege to her. (1.) The multitude of her friends, whom she relies upon for help, shall do her no good; for though they are terrible ones, they shall be like the small dust, and shall pass away. (2.) The multitude of her enemies shall not think that they can do her mischief enough; but, when they have devoured her much, still they shall be but like a man who dreams he eats, hungry, and greedy to devour more.

9. Stay yourselves and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. 10. For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers, hath he covered. 11. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men
deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed. 12. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.

13. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: 14. Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.

15. Wo unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? 16. Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?

Here,

1. The prophet stands amazed at the stupidity of the greatest part of the nation. They had Levites, who taught the good knowledge of the Lord, and had encouragement from Hezekiah in doing so; 2 Chron. xxx. 22. They had prophets, who brought them messages immediately from God, and signified to them what were the causes, and what should be the effects, of God's displeasure against them. Now one would think, surely this great nation, that has all the advantages of divine revelation, is a wise and understanding people, Deut. iv. 6. But alas! it was quite otherwise; v. 9. The prophet directs himself to the sober thinker, and part of them, calling upon them to be affected with the general carelessness of their neighbours. It may be read, "They delay, they put off their repentance, but wonder ye that they should be so fottish; they sport themselves with their own decennings, they riot and revel, but do ye cry out, lament their folly, cry to God by prayer for them. The more insensible they are of the hand of God gone out against them, the more do ye lay to heart these things." Note, The security of sinners in their sinful ways is just matter of lamentation and wonder to all serious people, who should think themselves concerned to pray for those that do not pray for themselves. But what is the matter? What are we thus to wonder at?

2. We may well wonder that the generality of the people are so settish and brutish, and so inattentive, as if they were intoxicated; They are drunken, but not with wine; (not with wine only, with that they were often drunk,) and they erred through wine, ch. xxviii. 7. They were drunk with the love of pleasures, with prejudices against religion, and with the corrupt principles they had imbibed; like drunken men, they knew not what they do or say, or whether they go. They are not sensible of the divine rebukes they are under. They have beaten me, and I felt it not, says the drunkard, Prov. xxiii. 35. God speaks to them once, yea twice; but, like men drunk, they perceive it not, they understand it not, but forget the law. They stagger in their counsels, are unstable and unsteady, and stumble at every thing that lies in their way. There is such a thing as spiritual drunkenness.

3. It is yet more strange that God himself has poured out upon them a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed their eyes, (v. 10.) that he who bids them awake, and rouses them from their errors by the word, lay them asleep, and shut their eyes; but it is in a way of righteous judgment, to punish them for their loving darkness rather than light, their loving sleep. When God by his prophets called them, they said, Yet a little sleep, a little slumber; and therefore he gave them up to strong delusions, and said, Sleep on now. This is applied to the unbelieving Jews, and is the reason why the gospel of Christ was so hardened upon them, till wrath came upon them to the uttermost; (Rom. xi. 8.) God has given them the spirit of slumber. And we have reason to fear it is the woful case of many who live in the midst of gospel-light.

3. It is very sad that this should be the case of those who were their prophets, and rulers, and seers; that they who should be their guides, are themselves blinded; and it is easy to see that the fatal consequences will be when he blind lead the blind. This was fulfilled when, in the latter days of the Jewish church, the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, were the great opposers of Christ and his gospel, and brought themselves under a judicial infatuation.

The understanding of the people, the means of conviction, knowledge, and grace, which they enjoyed, were ineffectual, and did not answer the end; (v. 11, 12.) "The vision of all the prophets, true and false, is become to you as the words of a book, or letter, that is sealed up; you cannot discern the truth of the real visions, and the falsehood of the pretended ones." Or, every vision particularly that this people had run upon them, and put forth to them, was become unintelligible; they had it among them, but were never the wiser for it, any more than a man (though a good scholar) is for a book delivered to him sealed up, and which he must not open the seals of. He sees it is a book, and that is all, he knows nothing of what is in it. So they knew that what Isaiah said was a vision amply fulfilled; but the meaning of it, and all that went to it, was only a sound of words to them, which they were not at all alarmed by, or affected with: it answered not the intention, for it made no impression at all upon them. Neither the learned nor the unlearned were the better for all the messages God sent them by his servants the prophets, nor desired to be so. The ordinary sort of people excepted, and their selves from regarding what the prophets said, with their want of learning and a liberal education; as if they were not concerned to know and do the will of God, because they were not bred scholars; It is nothing to me, I am not learned. These of better rank pretended that the prophet had a peculiar way of speaking, which was obscure to them, and which, though they were men of letters, they had not been used to; and, Si non insinuare, debes negligenti—If you wish not to be understood, you deserve to be neglected. Both these are groundless pretences; for God's prophets have been no unfaithful debtors either to the wise or to the unwise, Rom. i. 14. Or, we may take it thus; the book of prophecy was given to them sealed, so that they could not read it, as a just judgment upon them; because it had often been delivered to them unsealed, and they would not take pains to learn the language of it, and then made excuse for their not reading it, because they were not learned. But observe, The vision is become thus to you, whose minds the god of this world has blinded; but it is
not so in itself, it is not so to all; the same vision which to you is a "savour of death unto death, to others is, and shall be, a savour of life unto life." Knowledge is easy to him that understands.

1. The prophet, in God's name, threatens those who were formal and hypocritical in their exercises of devotion, v. 13, 14. Observe here.

1. The sin that is here charged upon them—dissembling with God in their religious performances. v. 13. He that is greater than the heart, and cannot be imposed upon with shows and pretences, charges it upon them, whether their hearts condemn them for it, or no. He that is greater than the heart, and knows all things, knows that though they draw nigh to him with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, yet they are not sincere in it. To worship God is to make our approaches to him, and present our adorations of him; it is to draw nigh to him as those that have business with him, with an intention therein to honour him. This we are to do with our mouth and with our lips, in speaking of him, and in speaking to him; we must render to him the calves of our lips, Hosea xiv. 2. And if the heart be full of his love and fear, out of the abundance of that heart, in both mouth and lips, there are many whose religion is lip-labour only. They say that which expresses an approach to God and an adoration of him, but it is only from the teeth outward. For, (1.) They do not apply their minds to the service; when they pretend to be speaking to God, they are thinking of a thousand impertinences: They have removed their hearts far from him, by the precept of men, who were shipwrecked in that great reformer, nor could they to his appointment, but their own inventions; the directions of their false prophets or their idolatrous kings, or their usages of the nations that were round about them; the tradition of the elders was of more value and validity with them than the laws which God commanded Moses. Or, if they did worship God in it, it was not conformable to his institution, in the days of Hezekiah, the royal eye to the precept of the man than to God's command. This our Saviour applies to the Jews in the time, who were formal in their devotions, and wedded to their own inventions, and pronounces concerning them, that in vain they did worship God. Matt. xvi. 8, 9.

2. It is a spiritual judgment with which God threatens to punish them for their spiritual wickedness; (v. 14.) I will add to do a marvellous work. They did one strange thing, they removed all sincerity from their hearts; now God will go on and do another, he will remove all saggacity from their heads; the wisdom of their wise men shall perish. They played the hypocrite, and thought to put a cheat upon God, and now they are left to themselves, to play the fool; and not only to put a cheat upon themselves, but to be easily cheated by all about them. Those that make religion no more than a pretence, to serve a turn, are out in their politics; and it is just with God to deprive those of their understanding, who part with their uprightness. This was fulfilled in the wretched infatuation which the Jewish nation were manifestly under, after they had rejected the gospel of Christ; they removed their hearts far from God, and therefore God justly removed wisdom far from them, and hid from their eyes the things that belonged even to their temporal peace. This is a marvellous work; it is surprising, it is astonishing, that wise men should of a sudden lose their wisdom, and be given up to strong delusions. Judgments on the mind, though least taken notice of, are to be most wondered at.

III. He shows the folly of those that thought to act separately and secretly from God, and were carrying on designs independent upon God, and which they projected to conceal from his all-seen eye.

Here we have, 1. Their policies described; (v. 15.) They seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, that he may not know either what they do, or what they design; they say, "Who sees us? No man, and therefore not God himself." The consultations they had about their own safety, they kept to themselves, and never asked God's advice concerning them; nay, they knew they were disagreeing to him, but thought they could conceal them from him; and if he did not know them, he could not baffle and defeat them. See what foolish, fruitless pains sinners take in their sinful ways; they seek deep, they sink deep, to hide their counsel from the Lord, who sits in heaven, and laughs at them. Note, A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is both the cause and effect of all the carnal worshipments and of the carnal confidences of hypocrites. Ps. xcv. 7. Ezek. viii. 12.—ix. 9.

2. The absurdity of their policies demonstrated; (v. 16.) "Surely your turning of things upside down thus, your various projects, turning your affairs this and that way to make them shape as you would have them; or, rather, your inverting the order of things, as if God despised and therefore what evidence give attendance to your projects, and that God must know no more than you think fit, which is perfectly turning things upside down, and beginning at the wrong end, it shall be esteemed as the potter's clay; God will turn and manage you, and all your counsels, with as much ease and as absolute a power, as the potter forms and fashions his clay." How God despises and therefore what little reason we have to dread, these contrivances of men, that are carried on without God, particularly these against him. They that think to hide their counsels from God; (1.) They do, in effect, deny him to be their Creator. It is as if the work should say of him that made it, "He made me not, I made myself." If God made us, he certainly knows us, as the psalmist says, he knoweth our downsitting and our upsitting, he who says that he does not see them, might as well say that he did not make them. Much of the wickedness of the wicked arises from this, they forget that God formed them, Deut. xxxii. 18. Or, (2.) Which comes all to one, they deny him to be a wise Creator; The thing framed with him that framed it. He had no understanding; for if he had understanding to make us so curiously, especially to make us intelligent beings, and to put understanding into the inward part, (Job xxxvi. 36.) no doubt he has understanding to know us, and all we say and do. As they that quarrel with God, so they that think to conceal themselves from him, do, in effect, charge him with folly; but he that formed the eye, shall he not see? Ps. xcv. 9.

17. Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest? 18. And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. 19. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. 20. For the terrible one is brought
to nought, and the scoffer is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off: 21. That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought. 22. Therefore thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. 23. But when he seeth his children, the work of his hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel. 24. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.

They that thought to hide their counsels from the Lord, were said to turn things upside down, (v. 16.) and they intended to do it unknown to God; but God tells them that he will turn them upside down his way; and let us see whose word shall stand, his or theirs. They disbelieve Providence; "Wait awhile," says God, "and you shall be convinced by ocular demonstration, that there is a God who governs the world, and that he governs it, and orders all the changes that are in it, for the good of his church." The wonderful revolution here foretold may refer primarily to the happy settlement of the affairs of Judah and Jerusalem after the defeat of Semmacherib's attempt, and the reposè which good people then enjoyed, when they were delivered from the alarms of the sword both of war and persecution. But it may look further, to the rejection of the Jews at the first planting of the gospel, (for their hypocrisy and iniquity were here foretold, v. 15.) and the admission of the Gentiles into the church.

In general, it is a great and surprising change that is here foretold, v. 17. Lebanon, that was a forest, is turned into a fruitful field; and Carmel, that was a fruitful field, shall become a forest. It is a counter-change. Note, Great changes, both for the better, and for the worse, are often made in a very little while. It was a sign given them of the defeat of Semmacherib, that the fruitfulness of Lebanon should be more than ordinarily fruitful; (ch. xxxvi. 30.) Ye shall eat your vineyards as gardens of grasses; food for man shall be (as food for beasts) is the spontaneous product of the soil; then Lebanon became a fruitful field, so fruitful, that that which used to be reckoned a fruitful field, in comparison with it, shall be looked upon but as a forest. When a great harvest of souls was gathered in to Christ from among the Gentiles, then the wilderness was turned into a fruitful field, and the Jewish church, that had long been a fruitful field, became a desolate and deserted forest, ch. liv. 1.

In particular, 1. Those that were ignorant shall become intelligent, v. 18. Those that understand not this prophecy, (but it was to them as a sealed book, St.) shall nevertheless understand it, and shall acknowledge, not only the hand of God in the event, but the voice of God in the prediction of it. The deaf shall then hear the words of the book; the fulfilling of prophecy is the best expostulation of it. The poor Gentiles shall then have divine revelation brought among them; and those that sat in darkness shall see a great light, and those that were blind shall see out of obscurity; for the gospel was sent to them to open their eyes, Acts xxvi. 18. Observe, In order to the making of men fruitful in good affections and actions, the course God's grace takes with them is, to open their under standings, and make them hear the words of God's book.

2. Those that were erroneous shall become orthodox; (v. 24.) That they erred in spirit, that were under mistakes and misapprehensions concerning the words of the book, and the meaning of them, shall be corrected, and they shall have a better understanding of things; the Spirit of truth shall rectify their mistakes, and lead them into all truth. This should encourage us to pray for those that have erred, and are deceived, that God can, and often does, bring such to understanding. They that murmured at the truths of God as hard sayings, and leved to pick quarrels with them, shall learn the true meaning of those sayings, and that they shall be better reconciled to them. They that erred concerning the providence of God, as to public affairs, and murmured at the dispersions of it, when they shall see the issue of things, shall better understand them, and be aware of what God was designing in all, Hosea xiv. 9.

3. Those that were melancholy shall become cheerful and prosperous; (v. 19.) The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord. Those who are poor in the world, and poor in spirit, who, being in affliction, accommodate themselves to their affliction— are purely passive, and not passionate, when they see God appearing for them, they shall add, or repeat, joy in the Lord. This intimates, that even in their distress they kept up their joy in the Lord, but now they increased it. Note. They who are happy in God, shall soon have cause given them greatly to rejoice in him. When joy in the world is decreasing and fading, joy in God is increasing and getting ground. This shining light shall shine more and more; for that which is aimed at, is that joy may be full. Even the poor among men may rejoice in the Holy One of Israel, and their poverty needs not deprive them of that joy, Heb. ii. 17, 18. And the meek, the humble, the patient, and dispassionate, shall grow in this joy. Note, the grace of meekness will contribute very much to the increase of our holy joy.

4. The enemies that were formidable shall become despicable. Semmacherib, that terrible one, and his great army, that put the country into such a panic, and the people into such an abject terror, shall be quite disabled to do any further mischief. The power of Satan, that terrible one indeed, shall be broken by the prevalence of Christ's gospel; and they that were subject to bondage, through fear of him that had the power of death, shall be delivered, Heb. ii. 14, 15.

5. The persecutors that were vexatious shall be quieted; (v. 20.) Also those who were troublesome to shall be quiet from the fear of them. To complete the repose of God's people, not only the terrible one from abroad shall be brought to nought, but the scoffer at home too shall be consumed and cut off by Hezekiah's reformation. Those are a happy people, and likely to be so, who, when God gives them victory and success against their terrible enemies abroad, take care to suppress vice and profligacy, and the spirit of persecution, those more dangerous enemies at home. Or, They shall be consumed and cut off by the judgments of God, shall be singled out to be made examples of. Or, They shall insensibly waste away, being put to confusion by the fulfilling of those predictions which they had made a jest of.

Observe, that had been the wickedness of these scoffer, for which they should be cut off; they had been persecutors of God's people and prophets, probably of the prophet Isaiah particularly, and therefore he complains thus feelingly of them, and of
their subtle malice. Some, as informers and persecutors, others, as judges, did all they could to take away his life, or, at least, his liberty. And this is very applicable to the chief priests and Pharisees, who persecuted Christ and his apostles, and for that sin they and their nation of scorners were cut off and consumed. (1.) They ridiculed the prophets and the serious professors of religion; they despised them, and did them utmost to bring them into contempt, and to keep them in the low seat of the scornful. (2.) They lay in wait for an occasion against them; by their snares they watch for iniquity, to see if they can lay hold on any thing that is said or done, that may be called an iniquity. Or, they themselves watch for an opportunity to do mischief, as Judas did to betray our Lord Jesus. (3.) They took advantage against them, and to the least slippage of the tongue; and if a thing were ever so little said amiss, it served them to ground an indictment upon them. They made a man, though he were ever so wise and good a man, though he were a man of God, an offender for a word, a word misconceived or misplaced, when they could not but know that it was well meant. They cavilled at every word that the prophet spake, and then by degrees they brought them through ever so innocently spoken, and without any design to afford them. They put the worst construction upon what was said, and made it criminal by strained innuendos. Those who consider how apt we are to speak unadvisedly, and to mistake what we hear, will think it very unjust and unfair to make a man an offender for a word. (4.) They did all this with a view to the prophecy that God is a faithful Jehovah, and will tell them of their faults, and told them of their faults. Those that reprove in the gate, reprovers by office, that were bound by the duty of their place, as prophets, as judges, and magistrates, to show people their transgressions, they hated these, and laid snares for them, as the Pharisees' emissaries, who were sent to watch our Saviour, that they might entangle him in his talk, (Matt. xxvii. 15.) that they might have something to lay to his charge, which might render him odious to the people, or obnoxious to the government; so persecuted they the prophets; and it is next to impossible for the most cautious to place their words so warily, as to escape such snares. See how base wicked people are, who bear ill-will to those who, out of good-will to them, seek to be their friends, and to forewarn them from their snares. Need reprovers have both of courage to do their duty, and of prudence to avoid the snare. (5.) They pervert judgment, and will never let an honest man carry an honest cause; They turn aside the just for a thing of nought; they condemn him, or give the cause against him, upon no evidence, no colour, or pretense, whatsoever. They ran a man down, and misrepresented him, by all the little arts and tricks they can devise, as they did our Saviour. We must not think it strange if we see the best of men thus treated; the disciple is not greater than his Master. But wait awhile, and God will not only bring forth their righteousness, but cut off and consume these scorners.

Ch. 1. 1. He who was made to blush by the reproaches, and made to tremble by the threatenings, of his enemies, shall now be relieved both against his shame and against his fear, by the rolling away of those reproaches, and the defeating of those threatenings; (v. 22.) Thus the Lord saith, who redeemed Abraham; called him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and so rescued him from the idolatry of his fathers, and plucked him out of the fire. He that redeemed Abraham out of his snares and troubles will redeem all that are by faith his genuine seed, cut of theirs. He that began his care of his church in the redemption of Abraham, when it and its Redeemer were in its loneliness, will not now cast off the care of it. Because the enemies of his people are so industrious in their efforts to mock them, and to frighten them, therefore he will appear for the house of Jacob, and they shall not be ashamed as they have been, but shall have wherewith to answer those that reproach them, nor shall their faces now wax pale; but they shall gather courage, and look their enemies in the face without change of countenance, as they have reason to do, who have the God of Abraham on their side, (v. 22.) but shall speak with his enemy in the gate, Ps. cxvii. 5. Christ shall not be ashamed, (ch. 1. 7.) for he shall see his seed; (ch. lii. 10.) he sees some, and forsees more, in the midst of him, flocking to the church, and residing there. (2.) His children are the work of God's hands; being formed by him, they are fitted for him, his workmanship, created unto good works. It seems as if the Saviour did think that their children are God's creatures, the work of the hands of his providence. But it will be much more a comfort to them, to see their children his new creatures, the work of the hands of his grace. (3.) He and his children shall sanctify the name of God as their God, as the Holy One of Israel; and shall bear a witness and worship the God of Israel. This is equal to be his being and remaining in a perpetual pale; when he is delivered from his contempt and dangers, he shall not magnify himself, but sanctify the holy One of Jacob. If God make our condition easy, we must endeavour to make his name glorious. Parents and children are then ornaments and comforts indeed to each other, when they join in sanctifying the name of God. When parents give up their children, and children give up themselves, to God to be to him for a name and a praise, then the forest will soon become a fruitful field.

CHAP. XXX. The prophecy of this chapter seems to relate (asa that in the chapter before) to the approaching danger of Jerusalem, and that of his people, and some times, and some events, foreseen from the beginning of prophetic revelation. Here is, 1. A just reproof to those who, in that distress, trusted to the Egyptians for help, and were all in a hurry to fetch succours from Egypt, v. 1.-7. II. A terrible threatening against those who slighted the good advice which God by his prophets gave them for the reposing of their minds in that distress, assuring them that whatever became of others, the judgment would certainly overtake them, v. 8.-17. III. A gracious promise to those who trusted in God, that they should not only see through the trouble, but should see happy days after it, times of joy and reformation, plenty of the means of grace, and therewith plenty of outward good things, and increasing joys and triumphs; (v. 18.-56.) many of these promises are very applicable to gospel grace. IV. A prophecy of the total rout and ruin of the Assyrian army, who should be an instrument of great joy, and an introduction to those happy times, v. 27.-32.

1. Wo to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin: 2. That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth, to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt: 3. Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in
the shadow of Egypt your confusion. 4. For his princes were at Zaan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes. 5. They were all ashamed of a people that could not profit them, nor be a help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach. 6. The burden of the beasts of the south: Into the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people that shall not profit them. 7. For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still.

It was often the fault and folly of the people of the Jews, that when they were insulted by their neighbours on one side, they sought for succour from their neighbours on the other side, instead of looking up to God, and placing their confidence in him. Against the Israelites they sought to the Syrians, 2 Chron. xvi. 2, 3. Against the Syrians they sought to the Assyrians, 2 Kings xi. 7. Against the Assyrians they sought to the Egyptians, and Rabshakeh upbraided them with it, 2 Kings xviii. 21. Now observe here,

1. How the sin of theirs is described, and what the punishment was in it that was provoking to God. When they saw themselves in danger and distress, (1.) They would not consult with God. They would do things of their own heads, and not advise with God, though they had a ready and certain way of doing it by Urim or prophets. They were so confident of the prudence of their own measures, that they thought it needless to consult the oracle; nay, they were not willing to put it to that issue: "They take counsel among themselves, and one from another; but they do not ask counsel, much less will they take counsel of me. They cover with a covering, (they think to secure themselves with one shelter or other, which may serve to cover them from the violence of the storm,) "but not of my Spirit;" (not such as God's spirit, in the mouth of his prophets, receiv'd from him, to prevent them from doing it,) "and therefore it will prove too short a covering, and a refuge of lies." (2.) They could not confide in God. They did not think it enough to have God on their side, nor were they at all solicitous to make him their Friend, but they strengthened themselves in the strength of Pharaoh; they thought him a powerful ally, and doubted not but to be able to cope with the Assyrians, while they had him for their ally. The shadow of Egypt was a strong one, but a shadow it was, the covering in which they wrapped themselves. 2. What was the evil of this sin; (1.) It bespoiled them rebellious,children; and a wo is here denounced against them under that character, v. 1. They were, in profession, God's children, but, not trusting in him, they were justly stigmatized as rebellious; for if we distrust God's providence, we do in effect, withdraw ourselves from our allegiance. (2.) They added sin to sin. It was sin that brought them into distress; and then, instead of repenting, they trespassed yet against the Lord, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. And that they abused God's mercies to them, in making them the fuel of their lusts, abused their afflictions too, in making them an excuse for their distrust of God; and so they made it worse, and add sin to sin; and they that do so, as they make their own chain heavy, so it is just with God to make their plagues wonderful. Now that which aggravated it was, (1.) That they took so much pains to secure the Egyptians for them; They walk, or go down to Egypt, travel up and down to find an advantageous road thither; but they have not asked at my mouth, never considered whether God would allow and approve of it or no. (2.) That they were at such a vast expense to do it, v. 6. They load the beasts of the south (horses, camels, and all such) with burdens from Egypt, which they took from Judah, with their riches, fancying, as it is commonly with a people in a fright, that they were safer any where than where they were. Or, they sent their riches thither, as bribes to Pharaoh's courtiers, to engage them in their interests, or as pay for their army. God would have helped them gratis; but if they will have it from the Egyptians, they must pay dearly for it, and the Egyptians will not do it for nothing; but other nations, that are so spent will turn to a bad account. They carried their effects to Egypt through a land (so it may be read) of trouble and anguish; that vast howling wilderness which lay between Canaan and Egypt, whence came the lion and fiery serpent, Deut. viii. 13. They would venture through that dangerous wilderness, to bring what they had to Egypt. For, (3.) They may be meant of Egypt itself, for it may well have been to the Egyptians a temptation, therefore a land of trouble and anguish, and which abounded in ravenous and venemous creatures. See what dangers men run into, that forsake God; and what dangers they will run into, in pursuance of their carnal confidences, and their expectations from the creature.

What would be the consequence of it; (1.) The Egyptians would receive their ambassadors, would speak kindly to them, and be willing to treat with them; (v. 4.) His princes were at Zaan, at Pharaoh's court there, and had their audience of the king, who encouraged them to depend upon his friendship, and the succours he would send them. But, (2.) They would not answer their expectation, they could not profit them, v. 5. For God says, They shall not profit them; (v. 6.) and every creature is that to us, (and no more,) which he makes it to be. Either, the forces they were to furnish them with, could not be raised in time; or, when they were raised, they were not fit for service, and they would not venture any of their veteran troops in the expedition; or, the march was so long, that they could not come up when they had contracted it; or, the conditions of it were so disadvantageous to them as not to be cordial to Israel, but would secretly incline to the Assyrians, upon some account or other; The Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose, v. 7. They shall hinder and hurt, instead of helping. And therefore, (3.) These people, that were now so fond of the Egyptians, would at length be ashamed of them, and of all their expectations from them, and confide in God, v. 7. The strength of Pharaoh, which was your pride, shall be your shame; all your neighbours will upbraid you, and you will upbraid yourselves, with your folly in trusting to it. And the shadow of Egypt, that land shadowing with wings, (ch. xviii. 1.) that was your confidence, shall be your confusion; it will not only disappoint you, and be the matter of your reproach and confusion, but shall be the occasion of your disgrace and reproach, and be an occasion of mischief to you," God afterward threatens the ruin of Egypt for this very thing, because they had dealt treacherously with Israel, and been a staff of a reed to them, Ezek. xxix. 6, 7. The princes and ambassadors of Israel, that were so forward to court an alliance with them, when they came among them, shall see folly in the name of Egypt; they will see how much of their trustlessness, that they shall all be ashamed of a people that could not be a help or profit to them, but a shame and reproach, v. 5. Those that trust in God, and
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They shall, for they have cried in vain, for the Lord shall hear their voice in the end of the world; and so it shall, for the book of the scriptures, no doubt, shall continue, and be read, to the end of time. Let it be written, 1. To shame the men of the present age, who would not hear and heed it when it was spoken; let it be written, that it may not be lost; their children may profit by it, though they will not. 2. To justify God in the judgments he was about to bring upon them; people will be tempted to think he was too hard upon them, and ever severe, unless they know how very bad they were, how very provoking, and what fair means God tried with them before he brought it to this extremity. 3. For warning to others not to do as they did, lest they fare as they fared; it is designed for admonition to those of future remote ages, when the ends of the world are come, 1 Cor. x. 11. It may be of use for God's ministers not only to preach, but to write; for that which is written remains.

II. The character given of the profane and wicked Jews is very sad; he must, if he will draw them in their own colours, write this concerning them, (and we are sure he does not bear false witness against them,) for they are the cause of the judgment of God is according to truth,) That this is a rebellious people, v. 9. The Jews were, for aught we know, the only professing people God had then in the world, and yet many of them were a rebellious people. 1. They rebelled against their own convictions and covenants; for they are lying children, that will not stand to what they say, that promise fair, but perform nothing; when he took them into covenant with him, he said of them, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie; (ch. lxiii. 8.) but they proved otherwise. 2. They rebelled against the divine authority; they are children that will not hear the law of the Lord, nor heed it, but will do as they have a mind, let God himself say what he will to contradict.

III. The charge drawn up against them is very high, and the sentence passed upon them very dreadful.

Two things they here stand charged with, and their doom is read for both, a fearful doom.

1. They forbade the prophets to speak to them in God's name, and to deal faithfully with them. This their sin is described, v. 10, 11. They took themselves alone, and the prophet hinder them from preaching, or, at least, from dealing plainly with them in their preaching, did so banter them and browbeat them, that they did, in effect, say to the seers, See not. They had the light, but they loved darkness rather. It was their privilege, that they had seers among them, but they did what they could to put out their eyes; that they had prophets among them, but they did what they could to stop their mouths; for they tormented them in their wicked ways, Rev. xi. 10. These that silence good ministers, and discontinue good preaching, are justly counted, and called, rebels against God. See what it was in the prophets' preaching, with which they found themselves aggrieved. (1.) The prophets told them of their faults, and warned them of their misery and danger by reason of sin, and they could not bear that. They must speak to them smooth things; must flatter them in their
sins, and say that they did well, and there was no harm, no peril, in the course of life they lived. Let a thing be ever so right and true, if it be not smooth, they will not hear it. But if it be agreeable to the good opinion they have of themselves, and will confirm them in that, though it be ever so false, and ever so great a cheat upon them, they will have it prophesied to them. Those deserve to be deceived, that desire to be so. (3.) The prophets stepped to the people with the sword of God's wrath drawn in their hand; so that they could not proceed without terror. And this they took amiss; when they went on forwardly in the way of their hearts, they said to the prophet, "Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path. What do you do in our way? Cannot you leave us alone?" Those saw their hearts fully set in them to do evil, that bid their faithful monitors to stand out of their way. Forbear, why shouldst thou be smitten? 2 Chron. xxv. 16. (3.) The prophets were continually telling them of the Holy One of Israel, what an Enemy he is to sin, and how severely he will reckon with sinners; and this they could not endure to hear. But the thing itself, and the expression of the prophet, was too serious for them; and therefore if the prophets will speak to them, they will make it their bargain that they shall not call God the Holy One of Israel; for God's holiness is that attribute which wicked people most dread. Let us no more be troubled with that state-prelude (as Mr. White calls it) to your impertinent harangues. Those have reason to fear perishing in their sins, that cannot hear to be frightened out of them.

Now what is the doom passed upon them for? We have it v. 12, 13. Observe, [1.] Who it is that gives judgment upon them; Thus saith the Holy One of Israel. That title of God which they particularly excepted against, the prophet makes use of. Faithful ministers will not be driven from using such expressions as are proper to awaken sinners, though they be displeasing. We must tell men that God is the Holy One of Israel, and so they shall find him, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. [2.] What the ground of the judgment is; because they despise this word; either in general, every word that the prophets said to them, or, this word in particular, which speaks God the Holy One of Israel; they despise the word, which is the soul of the whole expression of God's holiness; they are not awares of it, nor make it their hope, to put any confidence in it; but, rather than they will be beholden to the Holy One of Israel; will trust in oppression and perverseness, in the wealth they have got, and the interests they have made, by fraud and violence, or in the sinful methods they have taken for their own security, in contradiction to God and his word. By these they say, and therefore they say truly, which, if any weight be laid upon it, it comes down, nay, which often sinks with its own weight." The ruin they would hereby bring upon themselves, should be, First, A surprising ruin; the breaking shall come suddenly, at an instant, when they do not expect it; which will make it the more frightful; and when they are not prepared or provided for it, which will make it the more fatal. The ruin they would hereby bring upon themselves, should be, First, A surprising ruin; the breaking shall come suddenly, at an instant, when they do not expect it; which will make it the more frightful; and when they are not prepared or provided for it, which will make it the more fatal. The ruin they would hereby bring upon themselves, should be, First, A surprising ruin; the breaking shall come suddenly, at an instant, when they do not expect it; which will make it the more frightful; and when they are not prepared or provided for it, which will make it the more fatal. The ruin they would hereby bring upon themselves, should be, First, A surprising ruin; the breaking shall come suddenly, at an instant, when they do not expect it; which will make it the more frightful; and when they are not prepared or provided for it, which will make it the more fatal. The ruin they would hereby bring upon themselves, should be, First, A surprising ruin; the breaking shall come suddenly, at an instant, when they do not expect it; which will make it the more frightful; and when they are not prepared or provided for it, which will make it the more fatal.

(3.) The sentence passed upon them for this. Their sin shall be their punishment; *You will flee, and therefore you shall flee; you will be upon the full speed, and therefore you shall be pursued,追赶; you will speed, and therefore you shall be pursued,追赶.* The dogs are most apt to run barking after him that rides fast. The conquerors protected those that sat still, but pursued those that made. 

*(verse 15-17)* Observe, (1.) The method God put them into for salvation and strength. The God that knew them, and knew what was proper for them, and desired their welfare, gave them this prescription; and it is recommended to us all: [1.] Would we be saved from the evil of every calamity, guarded against the calamity of our own safety, the light of the soul, which are the only evil things in it? It must be in returning, and resting; in returning to God, and repose in him as our Rest. Let us return from our evil ways, into which we have gone aside, and rest and settle in the way of God and duty, and that is the way to be saved; [2.] Return from this project of going down to Egypt, and rest satisfied in the will of God, and heavenly, and trust him with our safety. In returning, in the thorough reformation of your hearts and lives; and in rest, in an entire submission of your souls to God, and a complacency in him, you shall be saved. [2.] Would we be strengthened to do what is required of us, and to bear what is laid upon us? It must be in quietness, and in confidence; we must keep our spirits calm and sedate by a continual dependence upon God, and his power and goodness; we must retire into ourselves with a holy quietness, suppressing all turbulent and tumultuous passions, and keeping the peace in our own minds. And we must rely upon God with a holy confidence that he can do what he will, and will do what is best for his people. And this will be our strength; it will inspire us with such a holy confidence that we will carry us with ease and courage through all the difficulties that may be in our way. [2.] The contempt they put upon this prescription; they would not take God's counsel, though it was so much for their own good. And justly will they die of their disease, that will not take God for their Physician. We are certainly enemies to ourselves, if we will not be subjects to him. They would not so much as agree with the method prescribed; *But ye said, No; [v. 16.] We will not make ourselves, for we will flee upon horses, and we will ride upon the swift; we will hurry hither and thither to fetch in foreign aids.* They think themselves wiser than God, and that they know what is good for themselves better than he does. When Sennacherib took all the fenced cities of Judah, those rebellious children could not be persuaded to sit still, and therefore they permit God's will to be done, as he did wonderfully at last; but they would shift for their own safety, and thereby they exposed themselves to so much the more danger. [3.] The sentence passed upon them for this. Their sin shall be their punishment; *You will flee, and therefore you shall flee; you will be upon the full speed, and therefore you shall be pursued,追赶; you will speed, and therefore you shall be pursued,追赶.* The dogs are most apt to run barking after him that rides fast. The conquerors protected those that sat still, but pursued those that made.
be assured of it, here shows that they who eat still and made God alone their Confidence, would have the comfort of it. It is matter of comfort to the people of God, when the times are very bad, that all will be well yet, well with them that fear God, when we say to the wicked, It shall be ill with them.

1. God will be gracious to them, and will have mercy on them: that is the foundation of all good. If we find favour with God, and have mercy upon us, we shall have comfort in the time that we have been afflicted.

2. He will wait to be gracious; (v. 18.) he will wait till you return to him and seek his face, and then he will be ready to meet you with mercy. He will wait, that he may do it in the best and fittest time, when it will be most for his glory, when it will come to you with the greatest pleasure. He will come to you with your favours, and let not slip any opportunity of being gracious to you.

3. He will stir up himself to deliver you, will be exalted, will be raised up of his holy habitation, (Zech. ii. 13.) that he may appear for you in more than ordinary instances of power and goodness; and thus he will be exalted; he will glorify his own name, that is it he aims at in having mercy on you, he will bring you to glory, be more gracious; (v. 19. and this, in answer to prayer, which makes his kindness doubly kind: He will be gracious to thee, at the voice of thy cry; the cry of thy necessity, when it is most urgent; the cry of thy prayer, when that is most fervent. When he shall hear it, there needs no more, at the first word he would answer thee, and say, Here I am.

Here he is very gracious indeed, in particular, (1.) Those who were disturbed in the possession of their estates, shall again enjoy them quietly. When the danger is over, the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry, when he shall hear it, he will answer thee.

2. Ye shall deifie also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menestrous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.

3. Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou sowest the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures.

4. The oxen likewise, and the young asses that ear the ground, shall eat clean provender which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fan. And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.

5. Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.

The closing words of the foregoing paragraph, (Ye shall be left as a beacon upon a mountain,) some understand as a promise, that a remnant of them should be reserved as monuments of mercy. Here the prophet tells them what good times should succeed these calamities; or, the first words in this paragraph may be read by way of antithesis, Notwithstanding this, yet will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious. The prophet, having showed that those who made Egypt their confidence would
teachers among them, and should have hearts to regard them, and not slight them as they had done; and yet they might be driven to it, as the bread was not a part of the water of affliction. It was a common saying among the old Puritans, Brown bread and the gospel are good fare. A famine of bread is not so great a judgment as a famine of the word of God, Amos viii. 11, 15. It seems that their teachers had been removed into corners, (probably, being forced to shift for their safety in the wilderness, Judges xiv. 19.) and their school had been shut up, and学业 was no longer suffered. This was a sign of the grace of God, and the ought, and hearing of the word behind them; by this it shall appear that they are the better for the means of grace they enjoy—they shall break off from their best-beloved sin. Observe, 1. How foolishly mad they had formerly been upon their idols, in the day of their apostacy! Idolaters are said to be mad upon their idols, (Jer. i. 38.) dotingly fond of them; they could not be weaned from them, like Caleph and the golden calf, and, though gold needs no pointing, they had coverings and ornaments on these; they spent no cost in doing honour to their idols. 2. How wisely mad (if I may so speak) they now were at their idols, what a holy indignation they conceived against them in the day of their repentance! They not only degraded their images, but defaced them; not so much as to spoil the shape of them, but in a pious fury threw away the gold and silver they were made of, though otherwise valuable, and convertible to a good use. They could not find in their hearts to make any vessel of honour of it. The rich clothes wherewith their images were dressed up, they cast away as filthy clothes, which renders those that touch them unclean; ". Thus the rich shall be sent away empty, and, perhaps, some true penitent's sin is become very odious; they loathe it, and loathe themselves because of it; they cast it away to the dunghill, the fittest place for it, nay, to the cross, for they crucify the flesh; their cry against it is, Crucify it, crucify it. They say unto it, Abi hine in malum rem—Get thee hence. They are resolved never to harbour it any more. They put it as far from them as they can, all the occasions of sin, and temptations to it, though they are as a right eye or a right hand, and protest against it as Euprim did, (Hos. xiv. 8.) What have I to do any more with idols? Probably, this was fulfilled in many particular persons, who, by the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib's army, were convinced of the folly of their idolatry, and forsee it; it was fulfilled in the body of the Jewish nation at their return from their captivity in Babylon, for they abhorred idols ever after; and it is accomplished daily in the conversion of souls, by the power of divine grace, from spiritual idolatry to the fear and love of God. Those that join themselves to the Lord, must abandon every sin, and say unto it, Get thee hence.

IV. God will then give them plenty of all good things when he gives them their teachers, and they give him their hearts, so that they begin to seek the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, then all other things shall be added to them, Matth. vi. 33. And when the people are brought to praise God, then shall earth yield her increase, and with it God, even our own God, shall bless us, Ps. lvii. 5, 6. So it follows here: "When ye shall fall out with your teachers, shall God give the rain of your seed?" v. 2. When we return to God in a way of duty, he will meet us with his favours. 1. God will give you rain of your seed, rain to water the seed you sow, just at the time that it calls for it, as much as it needs, and no more. Observe, How man's industry and God's blessing concern to the good things we enjoy relating to the life that is to come. God is thy part, and then God will give the rain of thy seed, that is his part. It is so in spiritual fruit; we must take pains with our hearts, and then wait on God for his grace. 2. The increase of the earth shall be rich and good, and every thing the best of the kind; it shall be fat and fat, very fat and very good, fat and plentiful, so we read it; good, and enough of it. You shall be poor indeed it was remarkably so after the defeat of Sennacherib, by the special blessing
of God, ch. xxxv. 30. God would thus repair the breasts they sustained by that devastation. 31. Not only the tillage, but the pasture ground, shall the remnant of God's people make remarkably fruitful; The cattle shall feed in large pastures; those that are at grass, shall have room enough, and the oxen and asses that are kept up for use, to eat the ground, which must be the better fed for their being worked, they shall eat clean provender; the corn shall not be given them in the chaff as usual, to make it go the further, but good clean corn fit for man's use. 32. And when the flocks and the herds shall share in the abundance; it is fit they should, for they groan under the burthen of the curse which man's sin has brought upon the earth. 4. Even the tops of the mountains, that used to be barren, shall be so well watered with the rain of heaven, that there shall be rivers and streams there, and running down thence to the valleys, (v. 25.) and this in the day of the great slaughter that should be made by the angel in the camp of the Assyrians; when the towers and batteries they had erected for the carrying on of the siege of Jerusalem, the army being slain, should fall of course. It is probable that this was fulfilled in the letter of it, and that about the same time that that army was cut off, there were extraordinary rains, in mercy to the land. V. The effect of all this should be extraordinary comfort and joy to the people of God. (v. 26.) Light, that is, knowledge, shall increase; when the prophecies are accomplished, they shall be fully understood; or, rather, triumph shall the light of the joy that is sown for the righteous, shall now come up with a great increase; the light of the sun shall become as bright and as strong as that of the sun, and that of the sun shall increase proportionably. and be as the light of seven days; every one shall be much more cheerful, and appear much more pleasant, than usual. There shall be a high spring-tide of joy in Judah and Jerusalem, upon occasion of the ruin of the Assyrian army, when the Lord binds up the breach of his people; not only saves them from being further wounded, but heals the wounds that have been given them by this invasion, and makes up all their losses. The great distress they were reduced to, their despair of relief, and the suddenness of their deliverance, would much augment their joy. This is not unfairly applied by many to the light which the gospel brought into the world to them that sat in darkness, which as far exceeded the Old Testament light, as that of the sun does that of the moon, and which proclaims healing to the broken-hearted, and the binding up of their wounds. 27. Behold, the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy; his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire. 28. And his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity; and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err. 29. Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the Mighty One of Israel. 30. And the Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones. 31. For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down, which smote with a rod. 32. And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps; and in battles of shaking will he fight with it. 33. For Tophet is ordained of old; yet, for the king it is prepared: he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood: the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it. This terrible prediction of the ruin of the Assyrian army, though it is a threatening to them, is part of the promise to the Israel of God; that God would not only punish the Assyrians for the mischief they had done to the Israel of God, but would disable and deter them from doing the like again; and this prediction, which would now shortly be accomplished, would ratify and confirm the foregoing promises, which should be accomplished in the latter days. Here is, I. God Almighty angry, and coming forth in anger against the Assyrians; he is here introduced in all the power and all the terror of his wrath, v. 27. The name of Jehovah, which the Assyrians disdain, and set at a distance from them, as if they were out of its reach, and it could do them no harm, behold, it comes from far; a messenger in the name of the Lord comes from as far off as heaven itself; he is a messenger of wrath, burning with his anger. God's lips are full of indignation at the blasphemy of Rabshakeh, who compared the God of Israel with the gods of the heathen; his tongue is as a devouring fire, for he can speak his proud enemies to ruin; his very breath comes with as much force as an overflowing stream, and with it he shall slay the wicked, ch. xi. 4. He does not stifle or smother his resentment, as men do theirs, when they are either causeless or impotent; but he shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, when he proclaims war with an enemy that sets him at defiance, v. 30. He shall display the indignation of his anger, anger in the highest degree; it shall be as the flame of a devouring fire, which carries and consumes all before it; with lightning or dissipation, and with tempest and hailstones, all which are the formidable phenomena of nature, and therefore expressive of the terror of the Almighty God of nature. II. The execution done by this anger of the Lord. Men are often angry, when they can only threaten, and talk big; but when God causes his glorious voice to be heard, that shall not be all, he will show the lighting down of his arm too, v. 36. The operations of his providence shall accomplish the meanings of his word; they that would not see the lifting up of his arm, (ch. xxvi. 11.) shall feel the lighting down of it, and find, to their cost, that the burden thereof is heavy, (v. 27.) so heavy, that they cannot bear it, but God will bear it for them, and unavoidably sink and be crushed under it. Who knows the power of his anger, or imagines what an offended God can do? Five things are here prepared for the execution: 1. Here is an overflowing stream, that shall reach to the midst of the neck, shall quite overwhelm the whole body of the army; and Semachethrib only, the head of it, shall keep above water and escape this stroke, while yet he is reserved for another in the house of Nisroch his god. The Assyrian arrow had been to Judah as an overflowing stream, reaching
event to the neck, (ch. viii. 7, 8,) and now the breath of God's wrath will be so to it.

2. Here is a siege of vanity, with which God will sift the nations, in which the Assyrian army was enrolled, (v. 22.) The great God can sift nations, for they are all before him as the small dust of the balance; he will sift them, not to gather out of them any that should be preserved, but so as to shake them one against another, put them into confusion, and shake them all away at last; for it is a sieve of vanity (which retains nothing) that they are all in the hand of the Lord. But let the Assyrians flatter themselves as they will; they shall be brought to nothing.

3. Here is a bridle, which God has in his jaws, to curb and restrain them from doing the mischief they would do, and to force and constrain them to serve his purposes against their own will, ch. x. 7. God particularly says of Semmacherib, (ch. xxxvii. 29.) that he will put a hook in his nose, and a bridle in his lips; it is a bridle causing them to err, forcing them to such methods as will certainly be destructive to themselves and their interest, and in which they will be infatuated. God with a word guides his people into the right way, (v. 21.) but with a bridle he turns his enemies headlong upon their own ruin.

4. Here is a rod, and a staff, even the voice of the Lord, his word giving orders concerning it, with which the Assyrian shall be struck down, v. 32. The Assyrian had been himself a rod, in God's hand, for the chastising of his people, and had smitten them—(ch. x. 5.) that was a transient rod; but against the Assyrian shall go forth a grounded staff; that shall give a steady blow, shall stick close to him, and strike home, so as to leave an impression upon him; it is a staff with a foundation, founded upon the enemies' deserts, and God's determinate counsel; it is a consumption determined: (ch. x. 23.) and therefore there is no escaping it, no getting out of the reach of it, it shall pass in every place where an Assyrian is found, and the Lord shall lay it upon him, and cause it to rest, v. 32. Such is the awful case of those that persist in enmity to God; the wrath of God abides on them.

5. Here is Tophet ordained and prepared for them, v. 33. The valley of the son of Hinnom, adjoining to Jerusalem, was called Tophet; in that valley it is supposed many of the Assyrian revolts were encamped, and were there slain by the descending angel; or there the bodies of those that were slain were burnt. Hezekiah had lately, and from yesterday, (so the word is,) ordained it; that is, say some, and did it by the head of it, to which they there burnt their children, and so prepared it to be a receptacle for the dead bodies of their enemies; for the king of Assyria, for his army, it is prepared, and there is fuel enough ready to burn them all; and they shall be consumed as suddenly and effectually as if the fire were kept burning by a continual stream of brimstone. For such the breath of the Lord, his word, by his power, will be to them. Not as Tophet, in the foregoing promises, slides insensibly into the promises of gospel-joices and comforts, so here, in the threatening of the ruin of Semmacherib's army, he points at the final and everlasting destruction of all impetuous sinners. Our Saviour calls the future misery of the damned, Gehenna, in allusion to the valley of Hinnom, which gives some countenance to the applying of this to that misery, as also that in the Apocalypse, that is so often called the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. This is said to be prepared of old for the devil and his angels, for the greatest of sinners, the proudest, and that think themselves not accountable to any for what they say and do; even for kings it is prepared. It is deep and large, sufficient to receive the world of the ungodly; the fide thereof is fire and brimstone.

6. God's wrath is the fire, and sinners make themselves fuel to it; and the breath of the Lord (the power of his anger) kindles it, and will keep it ever burning. See ch. lix. 24. Wherefore stand in awe and sin not.

III. The great joy which this should occasion to the people of God: the Assyrian's fall is Jerusalem's triumph: (v. 29.) Ye shall have a song as in the night, a psalm of praise, such as they sing, who by night stand in the house of the Lord, and sing to his glory who gives songs in the night. It shall not be the song of earthly things, but a song that is sung when a holy solemnity was kept in a grave and religious manner. Our joy in the fall of the church's enemies must be a holy joy, gladness of heart, as when one goes, with a pipe, (such as the sons of the prophets used when they prophesied, 1 Sam. x. 4.) to the mountain of the Lord, there to celebrate the praises of the Mighty One of Israel. Nay, in every place where the divine vengeance shall pursue the Assyrians, they shall not only fall unexamined, but all their neighbours shall attend their fall with tabrets and harps, pleased to see how God, in battles of shaking, such as shake them out of the world, fights with them; (v. 32.) for when the worked perish, there is shouting; and it is with a particular satisfaction that wise and good men see the ruin of those who, like the Assyrians, have insolently bid defiance to God, and trampled upon all mankind.

CHAP. XXXXI.

This chapter is an abridgment of the foregoing chapter; the heads of it are much the same. Here is, I. A song to those who, when the Assyrian army invaded them, trusted to the Egyptians, and not to God for succors, v. 1, 3. II. Assurance given of the care God would take of Jerusalem in that time of danger and distress, v. 4, 5. III. A call to repentance and reformation, v. 7, 8. A prediction of the fall of the Assyrian army, and the fright which the Assyrian king should thereby be put into, v. 5, 9.

1. WO to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORI! 2. Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words: but will arise against the house of the evil-doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity. 3. Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the Lord shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fall together. 4. For thus hath the Lord spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abuse himself for the noise of them; so shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof. 5. As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it and passing over he will preserve it.

This is the last of four chapters together, that begin with wo; and they are all woes to the sinners
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14.

that were found among the professing people of God; to the drunkards of Ephraim, (ch. xxviii. 1.) to Ariel, (ch. xxix. 1.) to the rebellious children. God can, and will, remove them. But for here, we trust they will go down to Egypt for help; for men's relation to the church will not secure them from divine woes, if they live in contempt of divine laws. Observe,

1. What the sin was, that is here reproved, v. 1.

1. Idolizing the Egyptians, and making court to them, as if happy were the people that had the Egyptians for their friends and will not go down to Egypt for help; for men's relation to the church will not secure them from divine woes, if they live in contempt of divine laws. Observe,

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1. Idolizing the Egyptians, and making court to them, as if happy were the people that had the Egyptians for their friends and will not go down to Egypt for help; for men's relation to the church will not secure them from divine woes, if they live in contempt of divine laws. Observe,
As an eagle stirs up her young when they are in danger, takes them and bears them on her wings, so the Lord led Israel out of Egypt: (Dor. xxxix. 11, 12) and as a mother comforteth her tender child, so he hath taught them; that they need not flee into Egypt again for shelter. **Defending, he will deliver it; he will so defend it as to secure the continuance of its safety; not defend it for awhile, and abandon it at last, but defend it so that it shall not fall into the enemy’s hand; I will defend this city, saith the Lord, against all its enemies, and I will preserve it;** the word for passing over is used in that sense only here and Exod. xii. 22, 23, 27, concerning the destroying angel’s passing over the houses of the Israelites, when he slew all the first-born of the Egyptians, to which story this refers here; the Assyrian army was to be routed by a destroying angel, who should pass over Jerusalem, though that deserved to be destroyed, and draw his sword against the besiegers. They shall be slain by the pestilence, but none of the besieged shall take the infection. Thus he will again pass over the houses of his people, and secure them.

6. **Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted.** 7. For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin. 8. Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man; and the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him: but he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited. 9. And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear, and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign, saith the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.

This explains the foregoing promise of the deliverance of Jerusalem; she shall be fitted for deliverance, and then it shall be wrought for her; for in that method God delivers.

1. Jerusalem shall be reformed, and so she shall be delivered from her enemies within her walls, v. 6, 7. Here is, (1.) A gracious call to repentance. This was the Lord’s voice crying in the city, the voice of the man, the voice of the sword, and the voice of the prophets projecting the judgment; **“Turn ye, O turn ye now, from your evil ways, unto God, return to your allegiance to him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted, from whom you, O children of Israel, have revolted.”** He reminds them of their birth and parentage, that they were children of Israel; and therefore under the highest obligations imaginable to the God of Israel to return to him. They are not only brought back by force, and as an encouragement to them to return to him. They have been backsliding children, yet children; therefore let them return, and their backslidings shall be healed; they have deeply revolted, with great address, as they supposed, the revolters are profound; (Hos. v. 2) but it will prove that they have revolted dangerously; the stain of their sins is gone deep into their nature, not to be easily got out, like the blackness of the Ethiopian; **They have deeply corrupted themselves,** (Hos. ix. 9,) they have sunk deep into misery, and cannot easily recover themselves; therefore you have need to hasten your return to God. (2.) A gracious promise of the good success of this call; (v. 7.) **In that day every man shall cast away his idols, in obedience to Hezekiah’s orders, which, till they were alarmed by the Assyrian invasion, many refused to do. That is a happy

fright which frightens us from our sins. It shall be a general reformation; every man shall cast away his own idols; shall begin with them, before he undertakes to destroy other people’s idols, which there will be no need of, when every man reforms himself. It shall be a thorough reformation; for they shall part with their idolatry, their beloved sin, with their idols of silver and gold, their idols that they are most fond of. Many make an idol of their silver and gold, and by the love of that are down to revolt from God; but those that turn to God cast away their idols. It is not only to be ready to part with it when God calls. It shall be a reformation upon a right principle, a principle of piety, not of politics, they shall cast away their idols, because they have been unto them for a sin, an occasion of sin; therefore they will have nothing to do with them, though they had been the work of their own hands, and upon that account they had a particular fondness for them. Sin is the work of our own hands, but in working it we have been working our own ruin, and therefore we must cast it away; and those are strangely wedded to it, who will not be prevailed with to cast it away, when they see that otherwise they themselves will be cast-aways. Some make this to be only a prediction that those who trust in idols, when they find they stand no chance at all in the battle, shall cast them away. But it agrees so exactly with ch. xxx. 22, 23, that I rather take it as a promise of a sincere reformation.

2. Jerusalem’s besiegers shall be routed, and so she shall be delivered from the enemies about her walls; the former makes way for this. If a people return to God, they may leave it to him to plead their cause against their enemies. Then, when they have cast away their idols, **then shall the Assyrian fall,** v. 8, 9. (1.) The army of the Assyrians shall be had dead upon the spot by the sword, not of a mighty man, nor of a mean man, nor of any man at all, either Israelite or Egyptian, not forcibly by the sword of a mighty man, not surreptitiously by the sword of a mean man, but by the sword of an angel, who strikes more strongly than a mighty man, and yet more secretly than a mean man; by the sword of the Lord, and his power and wrath in the hand of the angel: thus the young men of the army shall melt, and be discouraged, and become tributaries to death. When God has work to do against the enemies of his church, we expect it must be done by mighty men and mean men, officers and men, soldiers; whereas God can, if he pleases, do it without either. He needs not armies of men, who has legions of angels at command, Mat. xxvi. 53. (2.) The king of Assyria shall flee for the same, shall flee from that invisible sword, hoping to get out of reach of it, and he shall make the best of his way to his own dominions, shall pass over to some strong hold of his own, for fear lest the Jews should pass over Jerusalem, and take possession of it. Sennacherib had been very confident that he should make himself master of Jerusalem, and in the most insolent manner had set both God and Hezekiah at defiance; yet now he is made to tremble for fear of both. God can strike a terror into the bravest of men, and make the stoutest heart to tremble. See Job xviii. 11—14. He shall be afraid of the ensign, shall be in a continual fright at the remembrance of the ensign in the air, which perhaps the destroying angel displayed before he gave the fatal blow. Or, they shall be afraid of every ensign they see, suspecting it is a party of the Jews pursuing them. The banner that God displays for the encouragement of his people, (Ps. lx. 4,) will be a terror to his and their enemies. Thus he cuts off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth. But who will
do this? It is the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and
his furnace in Jerusalem; [1.] Whose residence is
there, and who there keeps house, as a man does
where his fire and his own are; it is the city of the
great King, and let not the Assyrians think to turn
him out of his possession of his own house. [2.] Who
is there a consuming Fire to all his enemies,
and will make them as a fiery even in the day of
his wrath, Ps. xxi. 9. He is himself a Wall of fire
round about Jerusalem, so that whoever assaults
her, does it at his peril, Zech. ii. 5. Rev. xvi. 5.
[3.] Who has his altar there, on which the holy
fire is continually kept burning, and sacrifices duly
offered to his honour, and with which he is well
pleased; and therefore he will defend this city,
especially having an eye to the great Sacrifice which
was there also to be offered, of which all the sacri-
fices were types. If we keep up the fire of holy
love and devotion in our hearts and houses, we may
depend upon God to be a Protection to us and them.

CHAP. XXXII.

This chapter seems to be such a prophecy of the reign
of Hezekiah, as amounts to an abridgment of the history
of it, and this with an eye to the kingdom of the Mes-
siah, whose government was typified by the thrones of
the kings of David, which resembled that of the Christ
called the Son of David. Here is, I. A prophecy of that
good work of reformation with which he should begin
his reign, and the happy influence it should have upon
the people, who had been destitute of God and dishonour-
blessed in the reign of his predecessor, v. 1-8. II. A
prophecy of the great disturbance that would be given
to the kingdom in the middle of his reign, by the Assyrian
invasion, v. 9-14. III. A promise of better times after-
ward, toward the latter end of his reign, in respect both
of piety and peace, (v. 15...20.) which promise may be
supposed to look as far forward as the days of the Mes-
siah.

1. BEHOLD, a king shall reign in righ-
teousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.
2. And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind,
and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a
dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a win-
ery land. 3. And the ears of them that
see shall not be dum; and the ears of them
that hear shall hearken. 4. The heart also
of the rash shall understand knowledge, and
the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready
to speak plainly. 5. The vile person
shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said
to be bountiful. 6. For the vile person will
speak villany, and his heart will work
iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter
error against the Lord, to make empty the
soul of the hungry; and he will cause the
drink of the thirsty to fail. 7. The instru-
ments also of the churl are evil: he de-
viseth wicked devices to destroy the poor
with lying words, even when the needy
spaketh right. 8. But the liberal deviseth
liberal things; and by liberal things shall he
stand.

We have here the description of a flourishing
kingdom; "Blessed art thou, O land, when it
is thus with thee, when kings, princes, and people,
are, in their places, such as they should be." It
may be taken as a directory both to magistrates and
subjects, what both ought to do; or as a panegyric
to Hezekiah, who ruled well, and saw something of
the happy effects of his good government: and it
was designed to make the people sensible how happy
they were under his administration, and how care-
ful they should be to improve the advantages of it,
and withal to direct them to look for the kingdom of
Christ, and the times of reformation which that
kingdom should introduce.

It is here promised, and prescribed, for the com-
fort of the church:

1. That magistrates should do their duty in their
places; and the powers answer the great ends for
which they were ordained of God, v. 1, 2. 1. There
shall be a king and princes that shall reign and
be great in the land; for it will not go well when there is no king in
Israel. The princes must have a king, a monarch
over them as supreme, in whom they may unite;
and the king must have princes under him as offi-
cers, by whom he may act, 1 Pct. ii. 13, 14. They
both shall know their place, and fill it up; the king
shall reign, and yet, without any diminution to his
just prerogative, the princes shall rule in a lower
sphere, and all for the public good. 2. They shall use
their power according to law, and not against it; they
shall reign in righteousness and in judgment, with
wisdom and equity, protecting the good, and pun-
ishing the bad: and those kings and princes Christ
owns as reigning by him, who decrees justice; (Prov.
vii. 13.) such a King, such a Prince himself is; he reigns by rule, and in righteousness will rule, (Ps. cxvii. 7.) as a king,
that man, that king that reigns in righteousness,
shall be as a hiding-place. When princes are as
they should be, people are as they would be. (1.)
They are sheltered and protected from many mis-
chiefs; this good magistrate is a covert to the sub-
ject from the tempest of injury and violence; he
defends the poor and protects them, that they be not
made a prey of by the mighty. Whither should op-
pressed innocence flee, when blasted by reproach,
or borne down by violence, but to the magistrate as
its hiding-place? To him it appeals, and by him it
is righted. (2.) They are refreshed and comforted
with many blessings; this good magistrate gives
such countenance to those that are poor, and in dis-
saster, and so good a character, that all that is praiseworthy, that he is as rivers of water in a
dry place, cooling and cherishing the earth, and
making it fruitful; and as the shadow of a great
rock, under which a poor traveller may shelter
himself from the scorching heat of the sun in a wea-
ry land. It is a great reviving to a good man, who
makes conscience of doing his duty, in the midst of
contempt and contradiction, at length to be backed,
and favoured, and smiled upon, in it by a good mag-
state. All this, and much more, the Man Christ
Jesus is to all the willing, faithful, subjects of his
kingdom. When the greatest evils befall us, not
only the wind, but the tempest, when storms of
guilt and wrath beset us, and beat upon us, they
drive us to Christ, and in him we are not only safe,
but satisfied and comforted; "there are rivers of
water for them that hunger and thirst after
righteousness, all the refreshment and comfort that
a needy soul can desire, and the shadow, not of a
tree, which sun or rain may beat through, but of a
rock, of a great rock, which reaches a great way
for the shelter of the traveller. Some observe here,
that as the covert, and the hiding-place, and the
rock, do these things receive the benefit of the
wind and storm, to save them from those that take
shelter in them, so Christ bore the storm himself,
to keep it off from us."

11. That subjects shall do their duty in their
places.

1. They shall be willing to be taught, and to
understand things aright; they shall lay aside their
prejudices against their rulers and teachers, and submit to the light and power of truth. v. 3. When this blessed work of reformation is set on foot, and men do their parts towards it, God will not be void of them that see, of the prophets, the seers, shall not be dim; but God will bless them with visions, to be by them communicated to the people; and those that read the word written, shall no longer have a veil upon their hearts, but shall see things clearly; then the ears of them that hear the word preached, shall hearken diligently, and readily receive what they hear; and not be still rejected and despised of the people. Therefore shall be done by the grace of God, especially gospel-grace; for the hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord has made, has new-made, even both of them.

2. There shall be a wonderful change wrought in them by that which is taught them. v. 4. (1.) They shall have a clear head, and be able to discern things that differ, and distinguish concerning them. The heart of those that are hasty and rash, and could not take time to digest and consider things, shall now be cured of their precipitation, and shall understand knowledge, for the Spirit of God will open their understanding; this blessed work Christ wrought in his disciples after his resurrection, (Luke xxiv. 43.) as a specimen of what he would do for all, in giving them an understanding, 1 John ii. 27. They shall be able to distinguish, and to discern, and to distinguish their words, and their sayings, and their discourse, as being very likely to be the effect, when their subjects allow themselves liberty to consider, and to think, so freely, as to take things right. (2.) They shall have a ready utterance; the tongue of the stammerers, that used to blunder whenever they spoke the things of God, shall now be ready to speak plainly, as those that understand what they speak of, that believe, and therefore speak. There shall be a great increase of such boldness, and methodical knowledge in the things of God, that those from whom one would not have expected it, shall speak intelligently of those things, very much to the honour of God, and the edification of their hearts. Their hearts being full of this good matter, their tongues shall be as the pen of a ready writer, Ps. xliv. 1.

3. The differences between good and evil, virtue and vice, shall be more discerned and confounded by those who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; (v. 5.) The vile shall no more be called liberal; (1.) Bad men shall no more be preferred by the prince. When a king reigns in justice, he will not put those in places of honour and power that are ill-natured, and of base and sordid spirits, and care not what injury or mischief they do, so they may but compass their own ends. Such are vile persons; (as Antichus is called, Dan. xi. 21.) when they are advanced, they are called liberal and bountiful, they are called benefactors, (Luke xxii. 25.) but it shall not always be thus; when the world grows wiser, men shall be preferred according to their merit; and honour (which was never thought seemly for a fool, Prov. xxvi. 1.) shall no longer lie away upon such. (2.) Bad men shall be made to succeed, among those that are not wise, nor grace disguised with the colours of virtue. There shall no more be said to Nabal, Thou art Nabal; (so the words are;) such a covetous muckworm as Nabal was, a fool but for his money, shall not be complimented with the title of a gentleman, or a prince; nor shall they call a churl, that minds none but himself; does no good with what he has, but is an unprofitable thistle; he shall not be called a man; nor shall they not say of him, He is rich; for so the word signifies; those only are to be reckoned rich, that are rich in good works; not those that have abundance, but those that use it well. In short, it is well with a people, when men are generally valued by their virtue, and usefulness, and beneficence to mankind, and not by their wealth, or titles of honour. Whether this was fulfilled in the reign of Hezekiah, and how far it refers to the kingdom of Christ, (in which we are sure men are judged of by what they are, not by what they have, and that man, who character mistaken,) we will not say; but it prescribes an excellent rule both to prince and people, to respect men according to their personal merit.

To enforce this rule, here is a description both of the vile person and of the liberal; and by it we shall see such a vast difference between them, that we must quite forget ourselves if we pay that respect to the vile person and the churl, which is due only to the liberal.

[1.] A vile person and a churl will do mischief, and the more if he be preferred, and have power in his hand; his honours will make him worse and not better, v. 6, 7. See the character of these base ill-conditioned men. First, They are always plotting some unjust thing or other, designing ill either to particular persons, or to the public, and contriving how to bring it about; and so many silly pikes they have to gratify, and mean reavings, that there appears not in them the least spark of generosity; their hearts will be still working some iniquity or other. Observe, There is the work of the heart, as well as the work of the hands; as thoughts are words to God, so designs are works in his account. They are chiefly designing mischief, and betwixt them, their hearts are intent upon it, and with a great deal of art and application they work iniquity. They devise wicked devices with all the subtlety of the old serpent, and a great deal of deliberation, which makes the sin exceeding sinful; for the more there is of plot and management in a sin, the more there is of Satan in it. Secondly, They carry on their plots by trick and dissimulation, when they are meditating iniquity, they practise hypocrisy, feign themselves just men, Luke xx. 20. The most abominable mischiefs shall be disguised with the most plausible pretences of devotion to God, regard to man, and concern for some common good. These are the vilest of men, that intend the worst mischiefs when they speak fair. Thirdly, They speak ill. When they are in a passion, you will see what the hand of God is, to those about them, which no way becomes men of rank and honour; or, in giving verdict or judgment, they villainously put false colours upon things, to pervert justice. Fourthly, They affront God, who is a righteous God, and loves righteousness: they utter error against the Lord, and therein they practise profaneness; for so the word signifies, which we translate hypocrisy. They give an unjust sentence, and then profanely make use of the name of God for the ratification of it; as if, because the judgment in God's, (Deut. i. 17.) therefore their false and unjust judgment was his; this is uttering error against the Lord, under pretence of uttering truth and justice for him: and nothing can be more impudently done against God, than to patronize wickedness with his name. They make false judgments, particularly when they are bound to protect and relieve.

1. Instead of supplying the wants of the poor, they impoverish them, they make empty the souls of the hungry; either taking away the food they have, or, which is almost equivalent, denying the supply which they want, and which they have to give. And they cause the drink of the thirsty to fail; they cut off the relief they use, of which it is written, (Ps. lxxxiv. 3.) as ever. Those are vile persons indeed, that rob the spital. 2. Instead of righting the poor, when they appeal to their judgment, they contrive to destroy the poor, to ruin them in their courts of judicature with lying words in favour of the rich, to whom they are plainly partial; vex, though the needs speak right, though the evidence
be ever so full for them to make out the equity of their cause, it is the bribe that governs them, not the right. Lastly, These curts and vile persons have always had instruments about them, that are ready to serve their villainous purposes; All their servants are wicked; there is no design so papply unjust, but there may be found those that would be employed as tools to put it in execution. The structure of the case, and our certainty of knowing our case not expect otherwise; but this is our comfort, that they can do no more mischief than God permits them.

2. One that is truly liberal, and deserves the honour of being called so, makes it his business to do good to every body, according as his sphere is, v. 8. Observe, First, The care he takes, and the contrary care he has to do good. He never is so much hindered in doing good things; as much as the churl or niggar projects how to save and lay up what he has for himself only, so much the good charitable man projects how to use and lay out what he has in the best manner for the good of others. Charity must be directed by wisdom, and liberal things done prudently and with device, that the good intention of them may be answered, that it may not be charity misplaced. The liberal man, when he has done all the charitable things that are in his power, devises liberal things for others to do according to their power, and puts them upon doing them. Secondly, The comfort he takes, and the advantage he has, in doing good; by liberal things he shall stand, or be established. The providence of God will reward him for his liberality with beauty and safety in old age. He is well with a land, when the recompense of charity, Ps. xxii. 5, 6. Some read it, The princes, or honourable man, will take honourable courses; and such honourable or ingenuous courses shall he stand, or be established. It is well with a land, when the honourable of it are indeed men of honour, and scorn to do a base thing; when its king is thus the son of nobles.

9. Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto my speech. 10. Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women; for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come. 11. Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones: strip ye, and make ye bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins. 12. They shall lament for the teas, for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. 13. Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers, yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city: 14. Because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; 15. Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness shall be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. 16. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. 17. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. 18. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places, 19. When it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place. 20. Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.

In these verses we have God rising up to judgment against vile persons, to punish them for their villany; but, at length, returneth them money to the liberal, to reward them for their liberality.

1. When there was so great a corruption of manners, and so much provocation given to the holy God, bad times might well be expected, and here is a warning given of such times coming. The alarm is sounded to the women that were at ease, (v. 9.) and the careless daughters, to fease whose pride, vanity, and luxury, their husbands and fathers were tempted to starve the poor. Let them hear what the prophet has to say to them in God's name; "Rise up, and hear with reverence and attention.

2. Let them know that God was about to bring wasting, desolating judgments upon the land in which they lived in pleasure, and were wanton. This seems especially to point at priapical insults made by Sennacherib's army, when he seized all the fenced cities of Judah: but when these words, many days and years, must be rendered, as the margin reads them, days above a year, something above a year shall this havoc be in making; so long it was from the first entrance of that army into the land of Judah, to the overthrow of it. But it is applicable to the wasted disappointment which they will certainly meet with, first or last, that set their hearts upon the world, and place their happiness in it; Ye shall be troubled, ye careless women. It will not secure us from trouble to cast away care when we are at ease; nay, to those who affect to live carelessly, even little trouble will be great vexations, and press hard upon them. They were careless and at ease, because they had money enough and mirth enough. But the prophet here tells them, (1.) That the country whence they had their rents and dainties, should shortly be laid waste; the vintage should fail; "And then what will ye do for wine to make merry with? The gathering of fruit shall not come, for there shall none be gathered, and you will find the fruit in its season. 10. Ye that want the teas, the good milk from the cows, the pleasant fields, and their productions; the useful fields that are serviceable to human life, are the pleasant ones; you will want the fruitful vine, and the grapes it used to yield you." The abuse of plenty is justly punished with scarcity; and they deserve to be deprived of the supports of life, who made them the food and fuel of lust, and prepared them for baseness. (2.) That the cities too, the cities of Judah, which they lived in when at ease, spent their rents and made themselves merry with their dainties, should be laid waste too; (v. 13., 14.) Briers and thorns, the fruits of sin and the curse, shall come up; not only upon the land of my people, which shall lie uncultivated, but upon all the houses of joy, the play-houses, the gaming-houses, the taverns in the joyous cities, and upon the inhabitants thereof; When a foreign army was ravaging the country, the houses of joy, no doubt, became houses of mourning; then the palaces, or noblemen's houses, were forsaken by their owners, who perhaps fled to Egypt for refuge; the multitude of the city were left by their leaders to shift for themselves. Then the stately houses shall be forsaken, which had been as forts and towers for strength and magnificence; when they shall be abandoned, the owners shall never return to them, every body shall look upon them to be like Jericho, an anathema; so that even when peace re-
turns, they shall not be rebuilt, but shall be thrown into the waste; a joy of wild asses, and a pasture of flocks. Thus is many a house brought to ruin by sin; Jam seg es est ubi Troja fall—Corn grows on the site of Troy.

2. In the foresight of this, let them tremble, and be troubled, strip them, and gird sackcloth upon their loins. This is the only way in which, when the calamity comes, they shall thus be made to tremble, and be forced to strip themselves, that then God’s judgments would strip them, and make them bare; but, (1.) That the best prevention of the trouble would be to repent and humble themselves for their sin, and lie in the dust before God in true remorse and godly sorrow, which would be the least thought of their troubles; and engaging God in the way of his judgments, and saving a correction by correcting our own mistakes; those only shall break that will not bend. (2.) That the best preparation for the trouble would be to deny themselves, and live a life of mortification, and to sit loose to all the delights of sense. Those that have already by a holy contempt of this world stripped themselves, can easily bear to be stripped, when trouble and death come.

II. While there was still a remnant that kept their integrity, they had reason to hope for good times at length, and such times the prophet here gives them a pleasant prospect of. Such times they saw in the latter end of the reign of Hezekiah; but the prophecy may well be supposed to look further, to the time of the Messiah, who is the great manifestation of righteousness and King of peace, and to whom all the prophets bear witness. Now observe,

1. How those blessed times shall be introduced; by the pouring out of the Spirit from on high, (v. 13.) which speaks not only of the good-will of God towards us, but the good work of God in us; for then, and not till then, there will be good times, when God by his grace gives men good hearts; and therefore God’s giving his holy Spirit to them that ask him, is, in effect, his giving them all good things, as appears by comparing Luke xi. 13. with Matth. vii. 11. This is the great thing that God’s people comfort themselves with the hopes of, that the Spirit shall be poured out upon them, that there shall be a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace that is not sufficient to bear our charges. Secondly, the Effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance, not only to the end of time, of our time, and in the end, but to the endless ages of eternity. Real holiness is real happiness, now, and shall be perfect happiness, that is, perfect holiness, for ever.

2. What a wonderfully happy change shall then be made. That which was a wilderness, dry and barren, shall become a fruitful field, and that which we now reckon a fruitful field, in comparison with what it shall be then, shall be counted for a forest; Then shall the earth yield her increase. It is promised, that in the days of the Messiah the fruit of the earth shall shake like Lebanon. Ps. lxxii. 16. Some apply this to the admission of the Gentiles into the gospel-church, which made the wilderness a fruitful field; but the rejection and exclusion of the Jewish church made a forest, which had been a fruitful field. On the Gentiles was poured out a spirit of life, but on the Jews a spirit of slumber. See what is the evidence and effect of the pouring out of the Spirit upon any soul; it is thereby made fruitful, and has its fruit unto holiness. Three things go to make these times happy.

(1.) Judgment and righteousness, v. 16. When the Spirit is poured out upon a land, then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and turn it into a fruitful field; and righteousness shall remain in the fruitful field, and make it yet more fruitful. Ministers should be careful to execute it; and both so judiciously and faithfully, that by both the bad shall be made good, and the good made better; among all sorts of people, the poor and low, and unlearned, that are neglected as the wilderness, and the rich and great, and learned, that are valued as the fruitful field, there shall be right thoughts of things, good principles commanding, and a sense of the glory and sin and duty. Or, in all parts of the land, both champaign and enclosed, country and city, the ruder parts and those that are more cultivated and refined, justice shall be duly administered. The law of Christ introduces a judgment or rule by which we must be governed, and the gospel of Christ a righteousness by which we must be saved; and wherever the Spirit is poured out, both these dwell and remain as an everlasting righteousness.

(2.) Peace and quietness, v. 17, 18. This is of two Kinds;

[1.] Inward peace, v. 17. This follows upon the indwelling of righteousness, v. 16. Those in whom that work is wrought shall experience this blessed product of it. It is itself peace, and the effect of all the good-time weatherings, and serenity and security of mind, by which the soul enjoys itself and its God, and it is not in the power of this world to disturb it in these enjoyments.

Note, Peace and quietness, and everlasting assurance may be expected, and shall be found, in the way and work of righteousness. True satisfaction is to be had only in true religion, and there it is to be had without fail. Those are the quiet and peaceable lives, that are spent in all godliness and honesty, 1 Tim. ii. 2. First, Even the work of righteousness shall be peace; in the doing of our duty we shall find abundance of true pleasure, a present great reward of obedience in obedience. Though the work of righteousness may be toilsome and costly, and expose us to contempt, yet it is peace, such true peace as is sufficient to bear our charges. Secondly, the Effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance, not only to the end of time, of our time, and in the end, but to the endless ages of eternity. Real holiness is real happiness, now, and shall be perfect happiness, that is, perfect holiness, for ever.

[2.] Outward peace, v. 18. It is a great mercy when those who by the grace of God have quiet and peaceful spirits, are by the providence of God made to dwell in quiet and peaceable habitations, not disturbed in their houses or solemn assemblies. When the terror of Sennacherib’s invasion was over, the people, no doubt, were more sensible than ever of the mercy of a quiet habitation; not disturbed with the alarms of war. Let every family study to keep itself quiet from strifes and jars which are now two against three, and three against two, in the house; and then put itself under God’s protection to dwell safely, and to be quiet from the fear of evil without. Jerusalem shall be a peaceable habitation; compare ch. xxxiii. 20. Even when it shall hail, and there shall be a violent battering storm coming down on the forest that lies bleak, then shall Jerusalem be a quiet resting-place, for the city shall be low in a low place; under the wind, not exposed (as these cities are that stand high) to the fury of the storm, but sheltered by the mountains that are round about Jerusalem, Ps. cxxv. 2. The high forts and towers are brought down; (v. 14.) but the city that lies low shall be a
quiet resting-place. Those are most safe, and may dwell most at ease, that are humble, and are willing to dwell low, v. 19. Those that would dwell in a peaceable habitation must be willing to dwell low, and in a low place. Some think here is an allusion to the preservation of the land of Goshen from the plague of hail, which made great destruction in the land of Egypt.

3. Plenty and abundance. There shall be such good crops gathered in every where, and every year, that the husbandmen shall be commended and thought happy, who sow beside all waters, (v. 20.) who sow all the grounds that are fit for seedness, who cast their bread, or broad-corn, upon the waters, Eccl. xi. 1. God will give the increase, but then the husbandman must be industrious, mind his business, and sow beside all waters; which if he do, the corn shall come up so thick and rank, that he shall turn in his cattle, even the ox and the ass, to eat the tops of it, and keep it under. This is applicable, [1.] To the preaching of the word. Some think it points at the ministry of the apostles, who, as husbandmen, went forth to sow their seed; (Matth. xiii. 3.) and they sowed beside all waters, they preached abroad, whereas they came. Waters signify people, and they preached to multitudes. Wherever they found men's hearts softened, and moistened, and disposed to receive the word, they cast in the good seed. And whereas, by the law of Moses, the Jews were forbidden to plough with an ox and an ass, (Deut. xxv. 9.) which intimates that Jews and Gentiles should not intermix, now that distinction shall be taken away, and both the ox and the ass, both Jews and Gentiles, shall be employed in, and enjoy the benefit of, the gospel-hush udyr. [2.] To works of charity; when God sends these happy times, blessed are they that improve them in doing good with what they have, that sow beside all waters, that embrace all opportunities of relieving the necessitous; for in due season they shall reap.

CHAP. XXXIII.

This chapter relates to the same events with that foregoing: the distress of Judah and Jerusalem by Sennacherib's invasion, and their deliverance out of that distress by the destruction of the Assyrians. It is an interpolation in the prophecy, in the way of a paradigm. Observe, I. The great distress that Judah and Jerusalem shall then be brought into, v. 1-2. II. The particular frights which the simple people shall then have, v. 3, 10, 11, 13, 15, 19. III. The prayers of good people to God in this distress, v. 2, 3, 4. IV. The holy security which they should enjoy in the midst of this trouble, v. 15, 16. V. The destruction of the army of the Assyrians, (v. 1, 5,) in which God would be greatly glorified, v. 5, 10, 12, 16. VI. The enriching of the Jews with the spoil of the Assyrian camp, v. 4, 23, 24, VII. The happy settlement of Jerusalem, and the Jewish state, upon this. Religion shall be uppermost, (v. 6,) and their civil state shall flourish, v. 17-32. This was soon fulfilled, but is written for our learning.

1. WHO to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee. 2. O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee; be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble. 3. At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered. 4. And your spoil shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar: as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them. 5. The Lord is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness. 6. And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord is his treasure. 7. Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without; the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly. 8. The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man caseth; he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man. 9. The earth mourneth and languisheth; Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down; Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits. 10. Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself. 11. Ye shall conceive chaff; ye shall bring forth stubble; your breath as fire shall devour you. 12. And the people shall be as the burnings of lime; as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.

Here we have,
I. The proud and false Assyrian justly reckoned with for all his fraud and violence, and laid under a wo, v. 1. Observe, 1. The sin which the enemy had been guilty of; he had spoiled the people of God, and made a prey of them, and herein had broken his treaty of peace with them, and dealt treacherously. Truth and mercy are two such sacred things, and have so much of God in them, that these cannot but be under the wrath of God, that make conscience of neither, but are perfectly lost to both, that care not what mischief they do, what spoil they make, what dissimulations they are guilty of, nor what solemn engagements they violate, to compass their own wicked designs. Bloody and deceitful men are the shame of men. 2. His punishment. 1. The immediate effect of this sin; he spoiled these that had never done him any injury, and that he had no pretence to quarrel with; and dealt treacherously with those that had always dealt faithfully with him. Note, The loss provoked we have from men to do a wrong thing, the more provocation we give to God by it. 3. The punishment he should fall under, for this sin. He that spoiled the cities of Judah shall have his own army destroyed by an angel, and his camp plundered by those whom he had made a prey of. The Chaldeans shall deal treacherously with the Assyrians, and revolt from them. Two of Sennacherib's own sons shall deal treacherously with him, and basely murder him at his devotions. Note, The righteous God often pays sinners in their own coin. He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity. Rev. xiii. 10.—xviii. 6. 4. The time when he shall be thus dealt with; when he shall make an end to spoil, and to deal treacherously; not by repentance and reformation, that might prevent his ruin, (Dan. iv. 27.) but when he shall have done his worst, when he shall have gone as far as God would permit him to go, to the utmost of his tether, then the cup of trembling shall be put into his hand. When he shall have arrived at his full stature in impiety, shall have filled up the measure of his iniquity, then all shall be called over again; when he has done, God will begin, for his day is coming.
II. The praying people of God earnest at the throne of grace for mercy for the land now in its distress; (v. 2.) "O Lord, be merciful to us; men are cruel, be thou gracious: we have deserved thy wrath, but we entreat thy favour; and if we may find thee propitious to us, we are happy; the trouble we are in cannot hurt us, shall not ruin us. It is in vain to expect relief from creatures, we have no confidence in the Egyptians; but we have waited for thee only, relying to submit to thy disposal. The trouble be, and hoping that it shall be a comfortable issue." Those that by faith humbly wait for God, shall certainly find him gracious to them. They pray, I. For those that were employed in military services for them; "Be thou their arm every morning." Hezekiah, and his princes, and all the men of war, need continual supplies of strength and courage from thee; supply their need, and thou shalt make all sufficient. Every morning, they go forth upon the business of the day, and perhaps have new work to do, and new difficulties to encounter, let them be refreshed, animated and invigorated, and as the day, so let the strength be." In our spiritual warfare, our own hands are not sufficient for us, nor can we bring anything to pass unless God not only strengthens us in our necessities, but also defends us. Our strength is in our Arm; so entirely do we depend upon him as our Arm every morning, so constantly do we depend upon his power, as well as his compassion, which are now every morning, Lam. iii. 23. If God leaves us to ourselves any morning, we are undone; we must therefore every morning commit ourselves to him, and go forth in his strength to do the work of the day. 2. For the body of the covenant; "Be thou our salvation also in the time of trouble; ours who sit still, and do not venture into the high places of the field." They depend upon God not only as their Saviour, to work deliverance for them, but as their Salvation itself; for whatever becomes of their secular interests, they will reckon themselves safe and saved, if they have him for their God. If he undertake to be their Saviour, he will be their Salvation; for as for God, his work is perfect. Some read it thus: "Thou who wast their Arm every morning, who wast the continual Strength and Help of our fathers before us; be thou our Salvation also in time of trouble; help as thou hast helped them; they looked unto thee, and were enlightened;" (Ps. xxxiv. 5.) let us then not walk in darkness. II. The Assyrian army rained, and their camp made a rich but cheap and easy prey to Judah and Jerusalem. No sooner is the prayer made, (v. 2.) than it is answered, (v. 3.) nay, it is outdone. They prayed that God would save them from their enemies; but he does more than that; he gives them victory over their enemies, and abundant cause to triumph; for, 1. The strength of the Assyrian camp is broken. 2. They are scattered, and go down as many thousands of them; at the noise of the tumult, or the shrieks of the dying men, which, we may suppose, did not die silently, the rest of the people fled, and shifted every one for his own safety. When God did thus lift up himself, the several nations, or clans, of which the army was composed, were scattered. It was time to stir, when such an opportunity offers to them; and when God arises, his enemies are scattered, Ps. lxi. 1, 2. 3. The spoil of the Assyrian camp is seized, by way of reprimis, for all the desolations of the defenced cities of Judah; (v. 4.) Your spoil shall be gathered by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, like the gathering of the caterpillar, and as the running to and fro of locusts; the spoilers shall be as easily, and as quickly, make themselves masters of them. The Assyrians, as a host of caterpillars, or locusts, make a field, or a tree, bare. Thus the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, and Israel enriched with the spoil of the Egyptians. Some make the Assyrians to be the caterpillars and locusts, which, when they are killed, are gathered together in heaps, as the frogs of Egypt, and are run upon, and trodden to dust.

IV. God and his Israel glorified and exalted hereby. When the spoil of the enemy is thus gathered, 1. It is a preparatory for that, which is the work of God. The Lord is exalted; it is his honour thus to abase proud men, and hide them in the dust, together; thus he magnifies his own name, and his people give him the glory of it, as Israel when the Egyptians were drowned, Exod. xv. 1, 2, &c. He is exalted as one that dwells on high, out of the reach of all their blasphemies, and that has an overruling power over them, and does, and works, and is gloriously delighted to those himself above them; that does what he will, and they cannot resist him. 2. His people will have the blessing of it. When God lifts up himself to scatter the nations that are in confederacy against Jerusalem, (v. 3.) then, as a preparatory for that, or, as the fruit and product of it, he has filled Zion with judgment and righteousness; not only with a sense of justice, but with a sense of holiness and righteousness, and his word administered. It shall again be called, The city of righteousness, ch. i. 26. In this the grace of God is exalted, as much as his providence was in the destruction of the Assyrian army. We may conclude God has mercy in store for a people, when he fills them with judgment and righteousness, when all sorts of people, and all their actions and transactions, are governed by them, and they are so full of them, that no other consideration can crowd in to sway them against these. Hezekiah and his people are encouraged (v. 6.) with an assurance that God would stand by them in their distress. Here is, (1.) A gracious promise of God for them to stay themselves upon—Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation. Here is a desirable end proposed, and that is, the stability of our times; that things be not disturbed and unhinged at home, and the strength of salvation, deliverance from, and success against, enemies abroad. The salvation that God ordains for his people has strength in it; it is a horn of salvation. And here are the way and means for obtaining this end—wisdom and knowledge; not only pithy and prudential; that is, it which, by the blessing of God, will be the stability of our times, and the strength of salvation. That wisdom which is first pure, then peaceable, and which sacrifices private interests to a public good; such prudence as this will establish truth and peace, and fortify the bulwarks, in defence of them. (2.) A plious maxim of state for Hezekiah and his people to govern themselves by—The fear of the Lord is his treasure; that is, God's treasure is his fear, and the world, from which he receives his tribute; or, rather, it is the prince's treasure. A good prince accounts it so, that wisdom is better than gold; and he shall find it so. Note, True religion is the true treasure of any prince or people; it denominates them rich. These places that have plenty of Bibles and ministers, and serious good people, are really rich, and it contributes to the rich makes a man rich in this world; it is therefore the interest of a people to support religion among them, and to take heed of every thing that threatens to hinder it.
remedy of their case might help to magnify God in it, and make them the more thankful, v. 7-9. It is here foretold, 1. That the enemy would be very insolent and abusive, and there would be no dealing with him; either by treaties of peace, for he has broken the covenant, and never hesitated at it, as if it were below him to be a servant to his word; or, by the preparations of war, for he has despised the cities: he seems to take notice either of their appeals to justice, or of their petitions for mercy.

2. That if God would make himself their help, and take care of them (though they are called fenced cities) and meets with so little resistance, that he despises them; and has no recollection, when he puts all to the sword, for he regards no man; has no pity or concern, not for those that he is under particular obligations to. He neither fears God, nor regards man; but is haughty and imperious to every one. There are those that take a pride in trampling upon all mankind, and have neither veneration for the honourable, nor compassion for the miserable.

2. That therefore he would not be brought to any terms of reconciliation; The valiant ones of Jerusalem, being unable to make their parts good with him, must be contentedly run down with noise and insolence, which will make them cry without, because the city cannot send out to prevent them, that they might have done, against a fair adversary. The ambassadors sent by Hezekiah to treat of peace, finding him so haughty and unmanageable, shall weep bitterly for vexation at the disappointment they had met with in their negotiations; they shall weep like children, as despairing to find out any expedient to pacify him.

That the mad horse should be made quite desolate for a time by his army. (1.) No man durst travel the roads; so that a stop was put to trade and commerce, and (which was worse) no man could safely go up to Jerusalem, to keep the solemn feasts; The highways lie waste. While the fields lie waste, trodden like the highways, the highways lie waste, untridden like the fields, for the roads are barren.

(2.) The earth used to rejoice in its own productions for the service of God's Israel, but now the enemies of Israel eat them up, or tread them down; it mourns and languishes; the country looks melancholy, and the country people have misery in their countenances, wanting necessary food for themselves and their families; the wonderful fruits of the land, the noblest, being set like ashes, so withering and uncertain are all worldly joys. The desolation is universal. That part of the country which belonged to the ten tribes, was already laid waste; Lebanon famed for cedars, Sharon for roses, Bashan for cattle, Carmel for corn, all very fruitful, are now become like wildernesses, are ashamed to be called by their old names, they are so unlike what they were. They shake off their fruits, before their time, into the hand of the spoiler, which used to be gathered seasonably by the hand of the owner.

VI. God appearing, at length, in his glory against this proud invader, v. 10-12. When things are brought thus to the last extremity, 1. God will magnify himself. He will make his power and pity so strongly appear, that his name will be glorified. But now will I arise, saith the Lord; now will I appear and act, and therein I will be not only evidenced, but exalted. He will not only demonstrate that there is a God that judges in the earth, but that he is God over all, and higher than the highest. Now will I lift up myself, will prepare for action, will act vigorously, and will be glorified in it. God's time to appear for his people is, when their affairs are reduced to the lowest ebb; when their strength is gone, and there is none shut up or left, Deut. xxxiii. 36. When all other helpers fail, then is God's time to help. 2. He will bring down the Assyrian; Ye, O Assyrians, are big with hopes that you shall have all the wealth of Jerusalem for your own, and are in pain till it be so; but all your hopes shall come to nothing. You shall conceive chaff, and bring forth stubble, which are not only worthless and good for nothing, but combustible and proper fuel for the fire, which they cannot escape, when your own breath, as fire, shall devour you. The breath of God's wrath, provoked against you by the breach of your sins, your malicious breath, the threatenings and slaughter you breathe out against the people of God, this shall devour you, and your blasphemies against God and his name. God would make their own tongues to fall upon them, and their own breath to blow the fire that should consume them. And no wonder that, as the people cried in a time in a time of the Lord's anger, and each cut up, which are dried and withered, and therefore easily take fire, and are soon burnt up. Such was the destruction of the Assyrian army; it was like the burning up of thorns which can well be spared, or the burning of lime, which makes it good for something. The burning of that army enlightened the world with the knowledge of God's power, and made his name shine bright.

13. Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my might. 14. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? 15. He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightness; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; 16. He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure. 17. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off. 18. Thy heart shall meditate terror. Where is the scribe? where is the receiver? where is he that counted the towers? 19. Thou shalt not see a fierce people; a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, that thou cannot understand. 20. Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. 21. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams: wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. 22. For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us. 23. The tacksings are loosened; they could not well strengthen their mast; they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil divided: the same take the prey. 24. And the inhabit-
Here is a preface that commands attention; and it is fit that all should attend, both near and far off, to what God says and does; (v. 13.) Hear, ye that are far off, whether in place or time. Let distant regions and future ages hear what God has done. They do so; they will do so from the scripture, with no less sure assurance as those that were near; the neighbouring nations, and those that lived then. But whoever hears what God has done, whether near or afar off, let them acknowledge his might, that it is irresistible, and that he can do everything. Those are very stupid who hear what God has done, and yet will not acknowledge his might.

Now what is it that God has done, which we must take notice of, and in which we must acknowledge his might?

I. He has struck a terror upon the sinners in Zion; (v. 14.) Fearfulness has surprised the hypocrites. There are sinners in Zion, hypocrites, that enjoy Zion's privileges, and concur in Zion's services, but their hearts are not right in the sight of God: they keep up secret haunts of sin under the cloak of a plausible profession, which covers the wants of hypocrisy. Sinners in Zion will have a great deal to answer for, above other sinners; and their place in Zion will be so far from being their security, that it will aggravate both their sin and punishment. Now those sinners in Zion, though always subject to secret frights and terrors, were struck with a more than ordinary consternation, from the convictions of their own consciences. 1. When they saw the Assyrian army besieging Jerusalem, and ready to set fire to it, and lay it in ashes, and burn the walls in the nest, finding they could not make their escape to Egypt, as some had done, and distracting the promises God had made by his prophets, that he would deliver them, they were at their wits' end, and ran about like men distracted, crying, "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Let us therefore abandon the city, and shift for ourselves elsewhere; one had as good live in everlasting burnings as live here." Who will stand up for us against this devouring fire? So some read it. See here how the sinners in Zion are affected when the judgments of God are abroad; while they were only threatened, they slighted them, and made nothing of them, as those that are more secure, but when God came in upon them, or run into the other extreme, then they magnify them, and make the worst of them: they call them devouring fire and everlasting burnings, and despair of relief and succour. Those that rebel against the commands of the word, cannot take the comforts of it in a time of need. Or, rather, 2. When they saw the Assyrian army destroyed; for the destruction of that is the fire spoken of immediately before, v. 11, 12. When the sinners in Zion saw what dreadful execution the wrath of God made, they were in a great fright, being conscious to themselves that they had provoked this God by their secret worshipping of other gods; and therefore they cry out, Who among us shall dwell with this devouring fire, before which so vast an army is as thorns? and this makes them afraid of the Assyrians as the burnings, which have made the Assyrians as the burnings of time? v. 12. Thus they said, or should have said. Note, God's judgments upon the enemies of Zion should strike a terror upon the sinners in Zion, nay, David himself trembles at them, Ps. cxix. 120. God himself is this devouring Fire, Heb. xii. 22. Who is able to stand before him? I Sam. iii. 20. His wrath will burn those everlasting, that have made themselves fuel for it: it is a fire that shall never be quenched, nor will ever go out of itself; for it is the wrath of an everlasting God, proceeding from his infinite justice, and is beyond the measure of time. Nor can the most daring sinners bear up against it, so as to bear either the execution of it, or the fearful expectation of it. Let this awaken us all to fly from the wrath to come, by flying to Christ as our Refuge.

II. He has graciously provided for the security of his people that trust in him; Hear this, and acknowledge his preserving care in his giving them this warning, righteousness, and speak uprightness, to dwell on high, v. 15, 16. We have here,

1. The good man's character, which he preserves even in times of common iniquity; in divers instances. (1.) He walks righteously; in the whole course of his conversation he acts by rules of equity, and makes conscience of rendering to all their dues; to God his dues, as well as to men theirs. His walk is righteousness itself; he would not for a world willingly do an unjust thing. (2.) He speaks uprightness; uprightness, so the word is; he speaks what is true and right, and with an honest intention. He cannot think one thing, and speak another; nor look one way, and row another. His word is to him as sacred as his oath, and is not yea and nay. (3.) He is so far from coveting ill-gotten gains, that he despises it, he thinks it an insult to the good name of his title, and unacceptable a man of honour, to enrich himself by any hardship put upon his neighbour. He seems to do a wrong thing, nay, to do a severe thing, though he might get by it. He does not overvalue gain itself, and therefore easily abhers the gain that is not honestly come by. (4.) If he have a bribe at any time thrust into his hand, to pervert justice, he shall shake his hand from holding it, with the utmost detestation, taking it as an affront to have it offered him. (5.) He steps his ears from hearing any thing that tends to cruelty or bloodshed, or any suggestions stirring him up to revenge, Job xxxii. 51. He turns a deaf ear to these that delight in war, and entice him to cast in his lot among them, Prov. i. 14, 16. (6.) He shuts his eyes from seeing of evil. He has such an abhorrence of sin, that he cannot bear to see others commit it, and does himself watch against all the occasions of it. Those that would preserve the purity of their souls, must keep a strict guard upon the senses of their bodies, must stop their ears to temptations, and turn away their eyes from beholding vanity.

2. The good man's comfort, which he may preserve even in times of common calamity, v. 16. (1.) He shall be safe: he shall escape the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings; he shall have access to, and communion with, that God who is a Devouring Fire, but shall be to him a Rejoicing Light. And as to present troubles, he shall dwell on high, out of the reach of them, nay, out of the hearing of the noise of them: he shall not be really concerned in, shall not be heard to be concerned at them: The floods of great waters shall not come nigh him; or, if they should attack him, his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks, strong and impregnable, fortified by nature as well as art. The divine power will keep him safe, and his faith in that power will keep him easy. God, the Rock of ages, will be his high Tower. (2.) He shall be supplied with that which is necessary for him; Bread shall be given him, even when the siege is strictest, and provisions are cut off; and his waters shall be sure, he shall be sure of the continuance of them, so that he shall not drink his water by measure, and with astonishment. They that fear the Lord shall not want any thing that is good for them.

III. He will protect Jerusalem, and deliver it out of the hands of the invaders. This storm, that
threatened them, should blow over, and they should enjoy a prosperous state again. Many instances are here given of this:

1. Hezekiah shall put off his sackcloth, and all the sadness of his countenance, and shall appear publicly in his beauty, in his royal robes, and with a pleasing aspect, (v. 17.) to the great joy of all his loving subjects. Those that walk uprightly shall not only have bread given them, and their wrongs are sure and surely be redressed, but see the King of kings in his beauty, the beauty of holiness, and that beauty shall be upon them.

2. The siege being raised, by which they were kept close within the walls of Jerusalem, they shall now be at liberty to go abroad upon business or pleasure, without danger of falling into the enemy's hand; and they shall enjoy the land that is very far off, they shall visit the utmost corners of the nation, and take a prospect of the adjacent countries, which will be the more pleasant after so long a confinement. Thus believers behold the heavenly Canaan, that land that is very far off, and comfort themselves with the prospect of it in evil times.

3. As a remembrance of the fright they were in, they shall add to the pleasure of their deliverance; (v. 18.) Thine heart shall meditate terror, meditate it with pleasure when it is over. Thou shalt think thou still hearrest the alarm in thine ears, when all the cry was, "Arm, arm, arm; every man to his post. Where is the scribe, or secretary of war? Let him appear, to draw up the muster-roll. Where is the number of the men, which is made up great

4. Let him see what he has in bank, to defray the charge of a defence. Where is he that counted the towers? Let him bring in the account of them, that care may be taken to put a competent number of men in each. Or, these words may be taken as Jerusalem's triumph over the vanquished army of the Assyrians, and the rather, because the apostle alludes to them in his triumphs over the learning of this world, when it was baffled by the gospel of Christ, 1 Cor. i. 20. The virgin, the daughter of Zion, despises all their military preparations. Where is the scribe, or master-mast of the Assyrian army? Where is their weigher, (or treasurer,) and where their engravers that counted the towers? They are all either dead or fled. There is an end of them.

5. They shall not more be afraid of the sight of the Assyrians, who were a fierce people naturally, and were particularly fierce against the people of the Jews, and were of a strange language, that could understand neither their petitions nor their complaints, and therefore had a pretence for being dead to them, nor could themselves be understood; "They are of a deeper speech than thou couldst hereafter, which will make them unknown for religious assemblies." The good people among them, in the time of their distress, were most in pain for Zion, upon this account, that it was the city of their solemnities, that the conquerors would burn their temple, and they should not have that to keep their solemn feasts in any more. In times of public danger, they in their own behalf and by their own religion, and the cities of our solemnities should be dearer to us than either our strong cities or our store-cities. It is with an eye to this, that God will work deliverance for Jerusalem, because it is the city of religious solemnities: let those be conscien-
shall have it with God. By faith we take Christ for our Prince and Saviour, and, as such, depend upon him, and devote ourselves to the observance of what he身价于特，and with what an emphasis laid upon the glorious name of God, they comfort themselves with this; Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our Lawgiver, Jehovah is our King, who, being self-existent, is self-sufficient, and all-sufficient to us.

7. The enemies shall be quite inebriated, and all their powers and projects broken, like a ship at sea in a storm of weather, that cannot ride out the storm, but, having her tackle torn, her masts split, and nothing wherewith to repair them, is given up for a wreck, v. 23. The treatises of the Assyrians are loosed; they are like a ship whose treatises are loosed, or forsaken by the ship's crew, when they give it over for lost, finding that they cannot strengthen the mast, but it will come down; they thought themselves sure of Jerusalem, but when they were just entering the port, as it were, and thought all was their own, they were quite becalmed, and could not spread their sail, but lay wind-bound till God poured the fury of his wrath upon them. The enemies of God's church are often disarmed and unrigged then when they think they have almost gained a victory.

8. Their camp shall be a rich booty for the Jews; Then is the fire of a great spoil divided. When the greater part were slain, the rest fled in confusion, and with such precipitation, that (like the Syrians) they left their tents as they were, so that all the treasure in them fell into the hands of the besieged, and even the lame take the fire, they that tarried at home did divide the spoil. It was so come to at, that not only the strong man might make himself master of it, but even the lame man, whose hands were lame, that he could not fight, and his feet, that he could not pursue; as the victory shall cost them no peril, so the prey shall cost them no toil. And there was such abundance of it, that when those who were forward, and came first, had carried off as much as they would, even the lame, who came late, found sufficient. Thus God brought good out of evil, and not only delivered Jerusalem, but enriched it, and abundantly recompensed the losses they had sustained. Thus comfortably and well do the frights and distresses of the people of God often end.

9. Both sickness and sin shall be taken away; and sin beget sin all away in mercy, when this is all the fruit of it, and the recovery from it, even the taking away of sin.

(1.) The inhabitants shall not say, I am sick; as the lame shall take the fire, so shall the sick, notwithstanding their weakness, make a shift to get to the abandoned camp, and seize something for themselves; or, there shall be such a universal triumph and joy upon this occasion, that even the sick shall, for the present, forget their sickness and the sores of it, and join with the public in its rejoicings; the deliverance of their city shall be their cure. Or, it intimates, that, whereas infectious diseases are commonly the effect of long sieges, it shall not be so with Jerusalem, but the inhabitants of it, with their victory and peace shall have health and life; and that God will take care not to have the account of sickness within their gates; or, those that are sick shall bear their sickness without complaining, as long as they see it goes well with Jerusalem. Our sense of private grievances should be drowned in our thanksgivings for public mercies.

(2.) The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven, or not only the sins, but all the of the nation forgiven their national guilt in the removing of the national judgment, but particular persons that dwell therein shall repent, and reform, and have their sins pardoned. And this is promised as that which is at the bottom of all other favours; he will do so and so for them, for he will be merciful to their insurrection, Heb. viii. 12. Sin is the sickness of the soul; when God pardons the sin, he heals the disease; and when the diseases of sin are healed by pardoning mercy, the sting of bodily sickness is taken out, and the cause of it removed; so that either the inhabitants shall not be sick, or, at least, shall not suffer themselves; they, as it were, by being wholly away, have little reason to complain of outward affliction. Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.

CHAP. XXXIV.

In this chapter, we have the fatal doom of all the nations that are enemies to God's church and people, though Edom only is mentioned, because for the old enemy of Esau to Jacob, which was typical, as much as that more ancient enmity of Cain to Abel, and flowed from the original enmity of the serpent to the seed of the woman. It is probable that this prophecy had its accomplishment in the great desolations made by the Assyrian army first, or, rather, by Nebuchadnezzar's army some time after, among those nations that were neighbours to Israel, and had been some way or other injurious to them. That mighty conqueror took a vast piece of blood and laying countries waste, and therein, quite beyond his design, he was fulfilling what God here threatened against his and his people's enemies; but we have reason to think it is intended as a description of the wrath of God against all those who fight against the interests of his kingdom among men, that it has its frequent accomplishment in the havoc made by the wars of the nations and other desolations wrought, and shall have its full accomplish- ment in the final dissolution of all things at the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. Here is, I. A demand of universal attention, v. 1. 11. A dreadful scene of blood and confusion presented, v. 2. 7. The reason given for these judgments, v. 8. 14. The continuance of this desolation, the country being made like the lake of Sodom, (v. 9, 10.) and the cities abandoned to wild beasts and melancholy fowls, v. 11.-15. The solemn ratification of all this, v. 16, 17. Let us hear, and fear.

1. Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people; let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. 2. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. 3. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. 4. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their hosts shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree. 5. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. 6. The sword of the Lord is filled with blood: it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. 7. And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be
sought with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness. 8. For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.

Here we have a prophecy, as elsewhere we have a history, of the wars of the Lord, which we are sure, are all both righteous and successful. This war must be of long duration, but it is in the interest of Satan, who is called the god of this world, he fights against it.

1. Here is the trumpet sounded, and the war proclaimed; (v. 1.) all nations must hear and hearken, not only because what God is about to do is well worthy their remark, (as ch. xxxiii. 13.) but because they are all concerned in it; it is in the interests of all; and therefore, let all nations come near to hear. The trumpet is blown in the city, (Amos iii. 6.) and the watchmen on the walls cry, Hearken to the voice of the trumpet, Jer. vi. 1. as the earth hearken, and the heavens thereof, for it is the Lord's, (Ps. xciv. 2.) and his anger is directed even to its Maker and Master. The world must hear, and all things that come forth of it, the children of men, that are of the earth, earthy, come out of it, and must return to it; or the inanimate products of the earth are called to, as more likely to hearken than sinners, whose hearts are hardened against the call of God, and therefore he is angry with them all, even with all the nations that forget him. He has long suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, (Acts xiv. 16.) but now he will no longer keep silence. As they have all had the benefit of his patience, so they must all expect now to feel his resentments. His fury is in a special manner upon all their armies. (1.) Because with them he has done mischief to the people of God; those are they that have made bloody work with them, and therefore they must be sure to have blood given them to drink. (2.) Because with them they hope to make their part good against the justice and power of God; they trust to them as their defence, and therefore on them, in the first place, God's fury will come. Armies before God's fury are but as dry stubble before a consuming fire, though ever so numerous and courageous.

2. Whom he makes war for, and what are the grounds and reasons of the war; (v. 8.) It is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and he it is to whom vengeance belongs, and who is never unrighteous in taking vengeance, Rom. iii. 5. As there is a day of the Lord's patience, so there will be a day of his vengeance; for though he bear long, he will not bear always; it is the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion. Zion is the holy city, the city of our solemnities, a type and figure of the church of God in the world. Zion has a just quarrel with her neighbours for the wrongs they have done her, for all their treacherous and barbarous usage of her, profaning her holy things, laying waste her palaces, and slaying her sons; she has left it to God to plead her cause, and he will do it when the time, even the set time, to favour Zion comes; then he will recompense to her persecutors and oppressors all the mischief they have done her. The controversy will be decided, that Zion has been wronged, and there-
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soaked with blood, as with the rain that comes often upon it, and in great abundance; and their dust, their flesh, and carcases, shall be made fat with the fatness of men slain in their full strength, as with manure. Nay, even the mountains, which are hard and rocky, shall be melted with their blood, v. 3. These expressions are hyperbolic, (as St. John's vision of blood to the horse-bridles, Rev. xiv. 20.) and are made use of because they sound very dreadful to sense, (it amongst men, even shiver to think of such a vast abundance of human gore,) and are therefore proper to express the terror of God's wrath, which is dreadful beyond conception and expression. See what work sin and wrath make even in this world; and think how much more terrible the wrath to come is, which will bring down the unicorns themselves to the bars of the pit.

5. This slaughter will be a great sacrifice to the justice of God; (v. 6.) The Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah; there it is that the great Redeemer has his garments dyed with blood, ch. lxiii. 1. Sacrifices were intended for the honour of God, to make it appear that he hates sin, and demands satisfaction for it; and that nothing but blood will make atonement: for these ends, this slaughter is raised up in it. Thus God will bring down the Edomites from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, especially their ungodly, unrighteous enmity to his people, which was the sin that the Edomites were notoriously guilty of. In great sacrifices, abundance of beasts were killed, hecatombs offered, and their blood poured out before the altar; and so will it be in the day of the Lord's vengeance. And thus had the whole earth been soaked with the blood of sinners, if Jesus Christ, the great Propitiation, had not shed his blood for us; but those who reject him, and will not make a covenant with God by that Sacrifice, will themselves fall as victims to divine wrath. Dammed sinners are everlasting sacrifices, Mark ix. 49. They that sacrifice to God (which is the character of the ungodly, Eccl. ix. 2.) must be sacrificed.

6. These slain shall be detestable to mankind, and shall be as much their loathing as ever they were their terror; (v. 3.) They shall be cast out, and none shall pay them the respect of a decent burial; but their stink shall come out of their carcasses, that all people by the odious smell, as well as by the ghastly sight, may hereby be conduced to conceive an indignation against sin, and a dread of the wrath of God. They be unburied, that they may remain monuments of divine justice.

7. The effect and consequence of this slaughter shall be universal confusion and desolation, as the whole frame of nature were dissolved and melted down; (v. 4.) all the host of heaven shall pine and waste; and so the word by the sun shall be darkness, and the moon look black, or he turned into blood; the heavens themselves shall be rolled together as a scroll of parchment, when we have done with it, and lay it by, or as when it is shrivelled up by the heat of the fire. The stars shall fall as the leaves in autumn; all the beauty, joy, and comfort, of the vanquished nation shall be lost and done away; no quietness in the land shall be darkned, and all dominion and rule, but that of the sword of war, shall fall. Conquerors, in these times, affected to lay waste the countries they conquered; and such a complete desolation is here described by such figurative expressions, as will yet have a literal and full accomplishment in the dissolution of all things at the end of time; of which last day of judgment, the judgments which God does now sometimes remarkably execute on sinful nations, are figures, earnest, and forerunners; and by these we should be awakened to think of that, for which reason these expressions are used here, and Rev. vi. 12, 13. But they are used without a metaphor, 2 Pet. iii. 10, where we are told that the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the earth shall be burnt up.

9. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. 10. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever: 11. The cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness. 12. They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing. 13. And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof; and it shall be a habitation of dragons, and a court for owls. 14. The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech-owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest. 15. There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow; there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate. 16. Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read; no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them. 17. And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line; they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein.

This prophecy looks very black, but surely it looks no further than upon Edom and Bozrah: 1. It speaks the melancholy changes that are often made by the divine providence, in countries, cities, palaces, and families; places that have flourished, and been much frequented, strangely go to decay. 2. We know not where to find the places where many great towns, celebrated in history, once stood. Fruitful countries, in process of time, are turned into barrenness, and pompous, populous cities into ruinous heaps. Old decayed castles look frightful, and their ruins are almost as much dreaded as ever their garrisons were. 2. It speaks the destroying judgments which are the effects of God's wrath, and the just punishment to those that are enemies to his people, which God will inflict, when the year of the redeemed is come, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion. Those that aim to ruin the church, can never do that, but will infallibly ruin themselves. 3. It speaks the final desolation of this wicked world, which is reserved unto fire at the day of judgment, 2 Pet. iii. 7. The earth itself, when it, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up, will (for ought I know) be turned into a hell to all those that set their affections only on earthly things; however, it shows us what will be the lot of the generation of God's curse.
1. The country shall become like the lake of Sodom, v. 9, 10. The streams thereof, that both watered the land, and pleased and refreshed the inhabitants, shall now be turned into pitch, shall be congealed, shall look black, and shall move slowly, or not at all. Their floods to lazy streams of pitch shall turn; so Sir R. Blackmore. The dust thereof shall be turned into brimstone; so combustible has sin become, that it may be made to seize, in a moment, the first spark of God's wrath struck upon it; and when it has taken fire, it shall become burning pitch; the fire shall be universal, not a house, or town, on fire, but a whole country; and it shall not be in the power of any to suppress or extinguish it; it shall burn continually, burn perpetually, and shall not be quenched night or day. The torment of those in hell, or that hell which is their inheritances, is without interruption; the smoke of this fire goes up for ever. As long as there are provoking sinners on earth, from one generation to another, an increase of sinful men, to augment the fierce anger of the Lord, (Numb. xxxii. 14.) there will be a righteous God in heaven to punish them for it. And as long as a people keep up a succession of sinners, God will keep up a succession of plagues, and will any that fall under the wrath of God, be ever able to recover themselves. It will be found, how light seover men make of it, that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. If the land be doomed to destruction, none shall pass through it, but travellers will choose rather to go a great way about than come within the smell of it.

II. The cities shall become like dead, decayed, howling cities, being deserted by the owners, look very frightful, being commonly possessed by beasts of prey, or birds of ill omen. See how desolately the palaces of the enemy look; the description is peculiarly elegant and fine.

1. God shall mark them for ruin and destruction; he shall stretch out upon Zebah the line of confusion with the stones or plunmets of emptiness, v. 11. This intimates the equity of the sentence passed upon it; it is given according to the rules of justice, and the exact agreement of the execution with the sentence; the destruction is not wrought at random, but by line and level. The confusion and emptiness that shall overspread the face of the whole country, shall be like that of the whole earth when it was Tuba in Zora, the very words here used, they are retired to every spot of earth to spread a paradise into a chaos, and sully the beauty of the whole creation, Gen. i. 2. When there is confusion there will soon be emptiness; but both are appointed by the Governor of the world, and in exact proportions.

2. Their great men shall be all cut off, and none of them shall dare to appear; (v. 12.) They shall call none of the kings to take care of the archious affairs which lie before them, but none shall be there to take this ruin under their hand, and all her princes, having the sad tidings brought them, shall be nothing, shall be at their wits' end, and not be able to stand them in stead, to shelter them from destruction.

III. Even the houses of state, and those of strength, shall be made like desolate places; (v. 13.) not only grass shall grow, but thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the forresses thereof, and there shall be none to cut them up, or tend them down. We sometimes see ruined buildings thus overgrown with rubbish. It intimates that the place shall not only be uninhabited and unfrequented, where a full court used to be kept, but that it shall be under the curse of God; for thorns and thistles were the production of the curse, Gen. iii. 18.

IV. They shall become the residence and rendezvous of fearful, frightful beasts and birds, which usually frequent such melancholy places, because there they may be undisturbed; and when they are frightened thither, they help to frighten men thence. This circumstance of the desolation, being apt to strike a horror upon the mind, is much enlarged upon here, v. 11. The cornerman shall possess it, or the pelican, which afflicts to be solitary, (Ps. civ. 19.) and the owl shall possess it; Gen. ix. 20. The owl, a melancholy bird, the raven, a bird of prey, invited by the dead carcasses, shall dwell there, (with all the ill-boding monsters of the air, Sir R. B.) all the uncarnal birds, which were not for the service of man, v. 13. It shall be a habitation for dragons, which are poisonous and hurtful. And in their burnt houses, Where singing mountain-dew did wait, Dragons shall be, and hungry wolves shall howl, in courts before by rauky lords posset, The serpent shall over his speckled crest, Or if the place be, a green meadow, See R. Blackmore.

That which was a court for princes, shall now be a court for owls or ostriches; (v. 14.) The wild beasts of the desert, the dry and sandy country, shall meet, as it were by appointment, with the wild beasts of the island, the wet marshy country, and shall regale themselves with such a perfect desolation as they shall find there.

The satyr shall cry to his fellow to go with him to this desert place, or, being there, they shall please themselves that they have found such an agreeable habitation. There shall the screech-owl rest, a night-bird, and an ominous one; the great owl shall there make her nest, (v. 15.) and lay and hatch; the breed of them shall be kept up, to provide heirs for this desolate place; the vultures, which feast on carcasses, shall be gathered there, every one with his mate. Now, observe, 1. How the places which men have deserted, and keep at a distance from, are proper receptacles for other animals, which the providence of God takes care of, and will not neglect. 2. Whom they resemble, that are morose, unsociable, and unconversable, and effect a melancholy rendezvous for all solitary creatures, that take delight in desolations. 3. What a dismal sin makes; it turns a fruitful land into barrenness; a frequented city into a wilderness.

V. Here is an assurance given of the full accomplishment of this prediction, even to the most minute circumstance of it; (v. 16, 17.) "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read. When this destruction comes, you shall be able to read this prediction, and you will find it to answer exactly. Note, The book of the prophets is the book of the Lord, (and we ought to consult it, and converse with it,) that has the authority of a divine origin: we must not only read it, but seek out of it, search into it, turn first to one text, and then to another, and compare them together. Abundance of useful knowledge might be obtained by an extensive search, out of the scriptures, which cannot be got by a superficial reading of them. When you have read the prediction out of the book of the Lord, then observe, 1. That according to what you have read, so you see; not one of these shall fail, either beast or fowl: and it being foretold that they shall possess it from generation to generation, in order to that, 2. That the prophet, if he prophecied, none shall want her mate; these marks of desolation shall be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the land. 2. That God's mouth having commanded this direful mus-
ter, his Spirit shall gather them, as the creatures by instinct were gathered to Adam to be named, and to Noah to be housed. 4. What God's word has appointed, his Spirit shall effect, and bring about, for no word of God shall fail to the ground. The word of God's promise shall in like manner be accomplished by the operations of the Spirit. 5. That there is an exact order and proportion observed in the accomplishment of this threatening; he has cast the lot for these birds and beasts, so that each one shall know his place, as readily as if it were marked by a sign. 6. Though he will not break their ranks, neither shall one thrust another. The southerners among the heathen foretold events by the flight of birds, as if the fate of men depended on them. But here we find that the flight of birds is under the direction of the God of Israel; he has cast the lot for them. 7. That the desolation shall be perpetual; They shall possess it for ever. God's Jerusalem may be laid in ruins, but Jerusalem the old recovered itself out of its ruins, till it gave place to the gospel-Jerusalem, which may be brought low, but shall be rebuilt, and shall continue till it give place to the heavenly Jerusalem. 8. But the enemies of the church shall be for ever desolate, shall be punished with an everlasting destruction.

CHAP. XXXV.

As after the predictions of God's judgments upon the world, (ch. xxiv.) follows a promise of great mercy to be had in store for his church, (ch. xxv.) so, here, after a black and dreadful scene of confusion in the foregoing chapter, we have, in this, a bright and pleasant one, which though it foretells the flourishing estate of Hezekiah's kingdom in the latter part of his reign, yet surely looks as far beyond that as the prophecy in the foregoing chapter looks beyond the destruction of the Edomites; both were typical, and it concerns us most to look at those things which they were typical of, the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of heaven. 1. When the world, which lies in wickedness, shall be laid in ruins, and the Jewish church, which persisted in infidelity, shall become a desolation, then the gospel-church shall be set up, and made to flourish. 1. The Gentiles shall be brought into it, v. 1, 2, 7. 2. If the well-wishers to it, who were weak and timorous, shall be encouraged, v. 3, 4. 3. Miracles shall be wrought both on the souls and on the bodies of men, v. 5, 6. 4. The gospel-church shall be conducted in the way of holiness, v. 8, 9, 10. It shall be brought at last into the kingdom of God, v. 11, 12. Thus do we learn more of Christ, and heaven, in this chapter, than one would have expected in the Old Testament.

1. THE wilderness, and the solitary place, shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

2. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. 3. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. 4. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you.

In these verses, we have,
1. The desert land blooming. In the chapter before, we had a populous and fruitful country turned into a horrid wilderness; here we have, in lieu of that, a wilderness turned into a good land. When the land of Judah was freed from the Assyrian army, those parts of the country that had been made as a wilderness by the ravages and outrages they committed, began to recover themselves, and to look pleasantly again, and to blossom as the rose. When the Gentile nations, that had been long as a wilderness, bringing forth no fruit to God, received the gospel, joy came with it to them, Ps. lxxvii. 3, 4. 
2. The joy which results. When Christ was preached in Samaria, there was great joy in that city, (Acts viii. 8.) that they sat in darkness saw a great and joyful light. And then they that blossomed, gave hopes of abundance of fruit; for that was it which the preachers of the gospel aimed at, (John xv. 16.) to go, and bearing fruit, Rom. i. 13. Col. i. 16. Though blossoms are often threatened in vain, fretting about nothing, yet they are in order to fruit. Converting grace makes the soul that was a wilderness to rejoice with joy and singing, and to blossom abundantly. This flourishing desert shall have all the glory of Lebanon given to it, which consisted in the strength and statefulness of its cedars, together with the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, which consisted in corn and cattle. Whatever is valuable in any institution, is brought into the gospel. All the beauty of the Jewish church was admitted into the Christian church, and appeared in its perfection, as the apostle shows at large in his epistle to the Hebrews; whatever was excellent and desirable in the Mosaic economy, is translated into the evangelical institution.
3. The glory of God shining forth; They shall see the glory of the Lord; God will manifest himself more than ever in his grace and love to mankind, (for that is his glory and excellency,) and he shall give them eyes to see it, and hearts to be duly affected with it. This is that which will make the desert blossom. The more we see by faith of the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God, the more joyful and the more fruitful shall we be.

4. God's prophets and ministers are in a special manner charged, by virtue of their office, to strengthen the weak hands, to comfort those who could not yet recover the fright they had been put into by the Assyrian army, with an assurance that God would now return in mercy to them. This is the design of the gospel; (1.) To strengthen those that are weak, and to confirm them, the weak hands, which are unable either to work or fight, and can hardly be lifted up in prayer, and the feeble knees, which are unable either to stand or walk, and unfit for the race set before us. The gospel furnishes us with strengthening considerations, and shows us where strength is laid up for us. Among true Christians, there are many weak hands and feeble knees, that are yet but baser than Christ; but it is our duty to strengthen our brethren, (Luke xxii. 32.) not only to bear with the weak, but to do what we can to confirm them, Rom. xv. 1. 1 Thess. v. 14. It is our duty also to strengthen ourselves, to lift up the hands which hang down, (Heb. xii. 12.) improving the strength God has given us, and exercising it. (2.) To draw these from their timorous and desponding state, who are of a fearful heart, because of their own weakness, and the strength of their enemies, that are hasty, (so the word is,) that are for betaking themselves to flight, upon the first alarm, and giving up the cause, that say, in their haste, “We are cut off and undone;” (Ps. xxxi. 22.) there is enough in the gospel to silence these fears; it says to them, and to us, “Be strong, fear not.” Be strong, fear not. Fear is weakening; the more we strive against it, the stronger we are both for doing and suffering; and, for our encouragement to strive, he that says to us, Be strong, has laid help for us upon One that is mighty.

4. Assurance given of the approach of a Saviour: “Your God will come with vengeance. God will appear for you against your enemies, he will recomp
pense both their injuries and your losses." The Messiah will come, in the fulness of time, to take vengeance on the powers of darkness, to spoil them, and make a show of them openly, to recompense those that mourn in Zion with abundant comforts; He will come and save us: with the hopes of this, the Old Testament saints strengthened their weak hands and their feeble knees against the time, will come in flaming fire, to consume those tribulation. 3. Those who have troubled his people, and to those who were troubled, rest, such a rest as will be not only a final period to, but a full reward of, all their troubles, 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. They whose hearts tremble for the ark of God, and are under a concern for his church in the world, may silence their fears with this, that their worship will be into his own hands. Your God will come, who pleads your cause, and owns your interest, even God himself, who is God alone.

5. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: 6. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. 7. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass, with reeds and rushes. 8. And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, The way of holiness; the uncircumcised shall not pass over it: but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. 9. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon; it shall not be found there: but the redeemed shall walk there. 10. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

"Then when your God shall come, even Christ, to set up his kingdom in the world, to which all the prophets bare witness, especially toward the conclusion of their prophecies of the temporal deliverances of the church, and this evangelical prophet especially—then look for great things."

1. Wonders shall be wrought in the kingdoms both of nature and grace, wonders of mercy wrought upon the children of men, sufficient to evince that it is no less than a God that comes to us.

2. Wonders shall be wrought in men's bodies; (v. 5, 6.) The eyes of the blind shall be opened; this was often done by our Lord Jesus, when he was here upon earth, with a word's speaking, and one go sight, that was born blind, Matth. ii. 27., xii. 32. xx. 30. John i. 6. By his power the ears of the deaf also were unstopped; with one word, Ephphatha—Be opened, Mark vii. 34. Many that were lame had the use of their limbs restored so perfectly, that they could not only go, but leap, and with so much joy to them, that they could not forbear leaping for joy, as that impotent man, Acts iii. 8. The dumb also were enabled to speak, and then no marvel that they were disposed to sing for joy, Matth. ix. 32, 33. These miracles Christ wrought, to prove that he was sent of God, (John iii. 2.) nay, working them by his own power, and

in his own name, he proved that he was God, the same who at first made man's mouth, the hearing ear, and the seeing eye. When he would prove to John's disciples his divine mission, he did it by miracles of this kind, in which this scripture was fulfilled.

2. Wonders, greater wonders, shall be wrought on men's souls. By the word and Spirit of Christ, those that were spiritually blind were enlightened, as Acts xx. 28. and those that were deaf to the calls of God, were made to hear, and understand them, whose heart the Lord opened, so that she attended, Acts xvi. 14. Those that were impotent to every thing that is good, by divine grace are made not only able for it, but active in it, and run the way of God's commandments. Those also that were dumb, and knew not how to speak of God, or to God, having their understandings opened to know him, shall thereby have their lips opened not only for his praise. The tongue of the dumb shall sing for joy, the joy of God's salvation. Praise shall be perfected out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.

II. The Spirit shall be poured out from on high. There shall be waters and streams, rivers of living water; when our Saviour spake of these, as the fulfilling of what was promised, and most probably, of this scripture, the evangelist tells us, He spake of the Spirit, (John vii. 38, 39.) as do also this prophet; (ch. xxxii. 15.) so here, (v. 6.) in the wilderness, where one would least expect it, shall waters break out. This was fulfilled when the Holy Ghost fell upon the Gentiles that heard the word; (Acts x. 44.) then were the fountains of life opened, whose streams flowed, and covered the earth abundantly. These waters are said to break forth, which denotes a pleasing surprise to the Gentile world, such as brought them, as it were, into a new world.

The blessed effect of this shall be, that the parched ground shall become a pool, v. 7. They that laboured, and were heavy laden, under the burden of guilt, and were scorched with the sense of divine wrath, found rest, refreshment, and abundant comforts, in the gospel. In the thirsty land, where no water was, no ordinances, (Ps. lxxxii. 1.) there shall be springs of water, a gospel-ministry, and by that the administration of all gospel-ordinances in their purity and plenty, which are the river that makes glad the city of our God, Ps. xlv. 4. In the habitation of dragons, who chose to dwell in the parched, scorched ground, (ch. xxxiv. 9, 12.) these waters shall flow, and dispel these infernal spirits, so that wherever they lay, shall be grass, with reeds and rushes, great plenty of useful productions. Thus it was when Christian churches were planted, and flourished greatly, in the cities of the Gentiles, which, for many ages, had been habitations of dragons, or devils rather, as Babylon; (Rev. xviii. 2.) when the princes of the nations' temples were altered, and they were converted to the service of Christianity, then the habitations of dragons became fruitful fields.

III. The way of religion and godliness shall be hid open; it is here called the way of holiness, (v. 8.) the way both of holy worship and a holy conversation. Holiness is the rectitude of the human nature and will, in conformity to the divine nature and will. (The way of holy worship) the course of religious duties in which men ought to walk and practise, with an eye to the glory of God, and their own felicity in the enjoyment of him. "When our God shall come to save us, he shall chalk out to us this way by his gospel, so as it had never been before described."

4. It shall be an appointed way: not a way of sufferance, but a highway, and a way which they are directed by a divine authority, and in which we are protected by a divine warrant. It is the King's highway, the King of kings' highway, in which, though we may be way-laid, we cannot be stopped.
The way of holiness is the way of God's commandments, it is (as highways are) the good old way,Jer. vi. 16.

2. It shall be an appropriated way; the way in which God will bring his own chosen to himself, but the unclean shall not pass over it, either to defile it, or to disturb those that walk in it. It is a way by itself, distinguished from the way of the world, for it is a way of separation from, and nonconformity to, this world; it shall be for those whom the Lord has set apart for himself, (Ps. iv. 3.) shall be reserved for them, the redeemed shall walk there, and the satisfied, they take in the great ways of their redemption shall be out of the reach of molestation from an evil world. The unclean shall not pass over it, for it shall be a fair way; those that walk in it are the undefiled in the way, who escape the pollution that is in the world.

3. It shall be a straight way; The woe-bearing men, who choose to travel in it, though fools, of weak capacity in other things, shall have such plain directions from the word and Spirit of God, in this way, that they shall not err therein; not that they shall be infallible in their own conduct, or that they shall in nothing mistake; but they shall not be guilty of any fatal misconduct, shall not so miss their way, but that they shall recover it again, and get well to their journey's end. They that are in the narrow way, though some may fall into some pot in the way, yet it is not quite right, but all meeting at last in the same end, shall yet never fall into the broad way again; The spirit of truth shall lead them into all truth that is necessary for them. Note, The way to heaven is a plain way, and easy to hit. God has chosen the foolish things of the world, and made them wise to salvation. Knowledge is easy to him that understands.

4. It shall be a safe way; No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast, (v. 9.) none to hurt and destroy; they that keep close to this way keep out of the reach of Satan, the roaring lion, that wicked one teaches them not. They that walk in the way of holiness may proceed with a holy security and serenity of mind, knowing that nothing can do them any real hurt; they shall be quiet from the fear of evil. It shall be a better way for Hezekiah than that of the enemy; the same time after the captivity of the ten tribes, that God, being displeased with the colonies settled there, sent lions among them, 2 Kings xviii. 23. But Judah keeps her integrity, and therefore no lion shall be there.

Those that walk in the way of holiness must separate themselves from the unclean and the ravenous, must save themselves from an unwise generation; hoping that they themselves are of the redeemed, let them walk with the redeemed, which shall walk there.

IV. The end of this way shall be everlasting joy, v. 10. This precious promise of peace now, will end shortly in endless joys and rest for the soul. Here is good news for the citizens of Zion, rest to the weary; The ransomed of the Lord, who therefore ought to follow him wherever he goes, (Rev. xiv.) shall return and come to Zion; 1. To serve and worship God in the church militant; they shall deliver themselves out of Babylon, (Zech. ch. ii. 7.) shall ask the way to Zion, (Jer. i. 5.) and shall find the way, ch. lii. 12. God will open them a door of escape out of their captivity, and it shall be an effectual door, though there be many adversaries. They shall join to the company of them that walk in Zion, that city of the living God, Heb. xii. 22. They shall come with songs of joy and praise for their deliverance out of Babylon, where they went upon every remembrance of Zion, Ps. cxxxvii. 1. They that by faith are made citizens of the gospel-Zion, may go on their way rejoicing; (Acts viii. 39.) they shall sing in the ways of the Lord, and be still praising him; they rejoice in Christ Jesus, and the sorrows and sighs of their convictions are made to fly away by the power of divine consolation. They that mourn are blessed, for they shall be comforted. 2. To see and enjoy God in the church triumphant; they that walk in the way of holiness, under the conduct of their Redeemer, shall come to Zion at last, to the heavenly Zion, shall come in a body, shall all be presented together, flawless, at the coming of Christ's glory with exceeding joy; (Jude 24. Rev. vii. 17.) they shall come, with songs. When God's people returned out of Babylon, Hosea ii. 11. but they shall come to heaven singing a new song, which no man can learn, Rev. xiv. 3. When they shall enter into the joy of their Lord, it shall be what the joys of this world never could be, everlasting joy, without mixture, interruption, or period; it shall not only fill their hearts, to their own perfect and perpetual satisfaction, but it shall be upon their heads, a diadem of glory, crown of triumph, an image of God, as a garland worn in token of victory; their joy shall be visible, and no longer a secret thing; as it is here in this world; it shall be proclaimed, to the glory of God, and their mutual encouragement; they shall then obtain the joy and gladness which they could never expect on this side heaven; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away for ever, as the tabernacles of Athaliah and the city of David. This is one of those prophecies which relate to the Assyrian invasion, conclude, for the support of the people of God under that calamity, and to direct their joy, in their deliverance from it, to something higher. Our joyful hopes and prospects of eternal life should swallow up all the sorrows, and all the joys, of this present time.

CHAP. XXXVII.

The prophet Isaiah is, in this and the three following chapters, an historian; for the scripture-history, as well as the scripture-prophecy, is given by inspiration of God, and was dictated to holy men. Many of the prophecies of these fore-going chapters have their parallel in Solomon's kings, and the empires of Assyria and Babylonia, the发展壮大 of Judah, and besieging of Jerusalem, and the miraculous defeat he met with there; and therefore the story of this is here inserted, both for the information of the sacred history, and for the encouragement of the people of God. The key of prophecy is to be found in history; and here, that which we might have the reader entrance, it is, as it were, hung at the door. The exact fulfilling of this prophecy might be a fit memorial before the rising people. These other prophecies, the accomplishment of which was at a greater distance. Whether this story was taken from the book of the Kings, and added here, or whether it was first written by Isaiah here, and from hence taken to the book of Kings, it is not material. But the story is the same almost verbatim; and it was so memorable an event, that it was well worthy to be twice recorded, 2 Kings xviii. and xix. and here; and an abridgment of it likewise, 2 Chron. xxxii. We shall be but short in our observations upon this story here, having largely explained it there. In this chapter, we have, 1. The descent which the king of Assyria made upon Judah, and his success against the cities (v. 1.) 2. The conference he desired to have with Hezekiah, and the managers on both sides, 2, 3. 3. Rabshakeh's railing blasphemous speech, with which he designed to frighten Hezekiah into submission, and persuade him to surrender at discretion, v. 4. 10. 4. His appeal to the people, and his attempt to persuade them to desert Hezekiah, and so force him to surrender, v. 11. 20. The report of this made to Hezekiah by his agents, v. 21, 22.

1. NOW it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacheribking of Assyria came up against all the defended cities of Judah, and took them. 2. And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem, unto
king Hezekiah, with a great army: and he stood by the conduit of the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field. 3. Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiah's son, which was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joash, Asaph's son, the recorder. 4. And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? 5. I say, saith thou, (but they are but vain words,) I have counsel and strength for war: now, on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me? 6. Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon, if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him. 7. But if thou say unto me, We trust in the Lord our God: is it not he whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar! 8. Now, therefore, give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them. 9. How then will thou turn away the face of one captain of the host of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? 10. And am I now come up without the Lord against this land to destroy it? The Lord said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

We shall here only observe some practical lessons from hence:
1. That a people may be in the way of their duty, and yet meet with trouble and distress. Hezekiah was reforming, and his people in some measure reformed; and yet their country is at that time invaded, and a great part of it laid waste. Perhaps they began to grow remiss and cool in the work of reformation; were doing it by halves, and ready to sit down short of a thorough reformation; and then God visited them with this judgment, to put life into them, and that good cause. We must not wonder, if, when we are doing well, God sends afflictions to quicken us to do better, to do our best, and to press forward toward perfection.
2. That we must never be secure of the continuance of our peace in this world, nor think our moun- tains are strong enough and cannot be moved: for Hezekiah was not only a pious king, but prudent, both in his administration at home, and in his treaties abroad. His affairs were in a good posture, and he seemed particularly to be upon good terms with the king of Assyria, for he had lately made his peace with him by a rich present; (2 Kings xviii. 14.) and yet that perfidious prince pears an army into his country all of a sudden, and lays it waste. It was good for us, therefore, always to keep up an expectation of trouble, that, when it comes, it may be no surprise to us, and then it will be the less a terror.
3. That God sometimes permits the enemies of his people, even those that are most impious and treacherous, to prevail far against them. The king of Assyria took all, or most, of the defenced cities of Judah, and then the country would of course be an easy prey to him. Wickedness may prosper awhile, but cannot prosper always.
4. Proud men love to talk big, to boast of what they are and have, and have done, and of what they will do, to insult over others, and set all mankind at defiance; though thereby they render themselves ridiculous to all wise men, and obnoxious to the wrath of that God who resists the proud. But they think to make themselves feared, though they make themselves hated, and to carry their point by great swelling words of vanity, June 16.
5. The enemies of God's people endeavour to conquer them by frightening them, especially by frightening them from their confidence in God. Thus Rabshakeh here, with noise and bawdy, runs down Hezekiah as utterly unable to cope with his master, or in the least to make head against him. It concerns us therefore, that we may keep our ground against the enemies of our souls, to keep up our spirits by keeping up our hope in God.
6. It is acknowledged on all hands, that those who forsake God's service, forfeit his protection. If that had been true, which Rabshakeh alleged, that Hezekiah had thrown down God's altars, he might justly infer, that he could not with any assurance trust in him for succour and relief, v. 7. That he may say to him, I charge thee to prop his stance, who say that they trust in the Lord and in his mercy: Is not this he whose commandments they have lived in the contempt of, whose name they have dishonoured, and whose ordinances they have slighted? How then can they expect to find favour with him.
7. It is an easy thing, and very common, for those that persecute the church and people of God, to pretend a commission from him for so doing. Rabshakeh could say, Am I now come up without the Lord? when really he was come up against the Lord, ch. xxxvii. 28. They that kill the servants of the Lord think they do him service, and say, Let the Lord be glorified. But, sooner or later, they will be made to know their error to their cost, to their confusion.

11. Then said Eliakim, and Shebna, and Joash, unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall. 12. But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee, to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall, that they may eat their own dung and drink their own piss with you? 13. Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria: 14. Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he shall not be able to deliver you. 15. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, The Lord will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. 16. Hearken not to Hezekiah; for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern;
17. Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. 18. Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The Lord will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? 19. Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? 20. Who are they among all the gods of the earth which have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand? 21. But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not. 22. Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, that was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

We may hence learn these lessons: 1. That, while princes and counsellors have public matters under debate, it is not fair to appeal to the people. It was a reasonable motion which Hezekiah's plenipotentiaries made, that this parley should be held in a language which the people did not understand, (v. 11.) because reasons of state are secret things, and ought to be kept secret, the vulgar being incompetent judges of them. It is therefore an unfair practice, and not doing as men would be done by, to incense subjects against their rulers by base insinuations. 2. Proud and haughty scorners, the fitter they are spoken to, commonly speak the fool. Nothing could be said more mildly and respectfully than that which Hezekiah's agents said to Rabshakeh. Beside that the thing itself was just, which they desired, they called themselves his servants, they petitioned for it, Speak, we pray thee; but this made him the more spiteful and impertinent. To give rough answers to those who give us soft answers, is one way of rendering evil for good; and those are wicked indeed, and it is to be feared, incurably, with whom that which usually turns away wrath does but make bad worse. 3. When Satan would tempt men from trusting in God, and cleaving to him, he does it by insinuating, that, in yielding to him, they may better their condition: but it is a false suggestion, and grossly absurd, and therefore to be rejected with the utmost abhorrence. When the world and the flesh say thus, "Make an agreement with us, and come out to us, submit to our dominion, and come into our interests, and you shall eat every one of his own wine;" they do but deceive us, promising liberty then when they would lead us into captivity and slavery. One might as well take Rabshakeh's word as theirs, for kind usage and fair quarter; therefore, when they speak fair, believe them not. Let them say what they will, there is no land like the land of promise, the holy land. 4. Nothing can be more absurd in itself, nor a greater affront to the true and living God, than to compare him with the gods of the heathen; as if he could do no more for the protection of his worshippers than they can for the protection of theirs: and as if the God of Israel could as easily be mastered as the gods of Hamath and Arpad. Where as they are vanity and a lie, they are nothing; he is the great I AM: they are the creatures of men's fancy, and the works of men's hands; he is the Creator of all things. 5. Presumptuous sinners are ready to think, that, because they have been too hard for their fellow-creatures, they are therefore a match for their Creator, and shall stand the trial; but if they are not subdued, and therefore the Lord himself shall not deliver Jerusalem out of their hand. But though the potsherd may strive with the potsherd of the earth, let them not strive with the Potter. 6. It is sometimes prudent not to answer a fool according to his folly. Hezekiah's command was, 'Answer him not; it will but provoke him to rail and blaspheme yet more and more; lest more be said to stop his mouth, for you cannot.' They had reason enough on their side, but it would be hard to speak it to such an unreasonable adversary without a mixture of passion; and if they should fail a railing like him, Rabshakeh would be too hard for them at that weapon. 7. It becomes the people of God to lay to heart the dishonour done to God by the blasphemies of wicked men, though they do not think it prudence to reply to those blasphemies. Though they answered him not a word, yet they rent their clothes, in a holy zeal for the glory of God's name, and a holy indignation at the contempt put upon it. They tore their garments, when they heard blasphemy, as taking no pleasure in their own ornaments, when God's honour suffered.

**CHAP. XXXVII.**

In this chapter we have a further repetition of the story which we had before in the book of Kings, concerning Sennacherib's campaign. He rose to full speech, threatening and threatening to conquer. In this chapter, we have him falling, and, at last, fallen, in answer to prayer, and in performance of many of the prophecies which we have met with in the foregoing chapters. Here we have, I. Hezekiah's pious repentance of Rabshakeh's impious discourse, v. 1. II. The gracious message he sent to Isaiah to desire his prayers, v. 2. III. The encouraging answer which Isaiah sent him, assuring him that God would plead his cause against the king of Assyria, v. 6, 7. IV. An abusive letter which the king of Assyria sent to Hezekiah, to the same purpose with Rabshakeh's speech, v. 8. V. Hezekiah's humble prayer to God upon the receipt of this letter, v. 14. VI. The further full answer which God sent him by Isaiah, promising him that his affairs should come to a happy issue; he should blow over, and every thing should appear bright and serene, v. 21. VII. The immediate accomplishment of this prophecy in the ruin of his army, v. 39. and the murder of himself, v. 37, 38. All which was largely opened 2 Kings 19.
Lord thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left.

5. So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. 6. And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. 7. Behold, I will send a blast upon him; and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land: and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

We must observe here,

1. That the best way to baffie the malicious designs of our enemies against us, is, to be driven by them to God and to our duty, and so to fetch meat out of the eater. Rabshakeh intended to frighten Hezekiah from the Lord, but it proves that he frightens him to the Lord. The wind, instead of forcing the traveller's coat from him, makes him wrap it the closer about him. The more Rabshakeh reproaches God, the more Hezekiah studies to honour him, by this means hiding his clothes, and the dishonour done to him, and attending in his sanctuary to know his mind.

2. That it well becomes great men to desire the prayers of good men and good ministers. Hezekiah sent messengers, and honourable ones, those of the first rank, to Isaiah, to desire his prayers, remembering how much his prophecies of late had plainly looked toward the events of the present day; in dependence upon which, it is probable, he doubted not but that the issue would be comfortable, yet he would have it to be so in answer to prayer: This is a day of trouble, therefore let it be a day of prayer.

3. When we are most at a plunge, we should be most earnest in prayer: Now that the children are brought to the birth, but there is not strength to bring forth, now let prayer come, and help at a dead lift; when pains are most strong, let prayers be most lively; and when we meet with the greatest difficulties, then is a time to stir up not ourselves only, but others also, to take hold on God. Prayer is the midwife of mercy, that helps to bring it forth.

4. It is an encouragement to prayer, though we have reason to despair: We may ask, "Shall the Lord thy God hear, who knows but he will return and repent? The it may be of the prospect of the heaven of blessings, should quicken us with double diligence to ply the ear of prayer.

5. When there is a remnant left, and but a remnant, it concerns us to lift up a prayer for that remnant, v. 4. The prayer that reaches heaven must be lifted up by a strong faith, earnest desires, and a direct intention to the glory of God; all which should be quickened when we come to the last stage.

6. Those that have made God their Enemy, we have no reason to be afraid of, for they are marked for ruin; and though they may hiss, they cannot hurt. Rabshakeh has blasphemed God, and therefore let not Hezekiah be afraid of him, v. 6. He has made God a Party to the cause by his inventives, and therefore judgment will certainly be given against him. God will certainly plead his own cause.

7. Sinners' fears are but prefaces to their falls; he shall hear the rumour of the slaughter of his army, which shall oblige him to retire to his own land. He shall be slain; he shall be slain. The terrors that pursue him shall bring him at last to the king of terrors, Job xviii. 11, 14. The curses that come upon sinners shall overtake them.

8. So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was deputied from Lachish. 9. And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee: and when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, 10. Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered? 12. Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Telassar? 13. Where is the king of Hannath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? 14. And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord. 15. And Hezekiah prayed unto the Lord, saying, 16. O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. 17. Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear; open thine eyes, O Lord, and see; and hear all the words of Senacharib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. 18. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have hid waste all the nations, and their countries, 19. And have cast their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them. 20. Now, therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only.

We may observe here,

1. That if God gives us inward satisfaction in the promise, this may confirm us in our silent bearing of reproaches. God answered Hezekiah, but it does not appear that he, after deliberation, sent any answer to Rabshakeh; but God having taken the work into his own hands, he quietly left the matter with him. So Rabshakeh returned to the king his master for fresh instructions.

2. Those that delight in war shall have enough of it. Senacharib, without provocation given to him, or warning given by him, went forth against Judah; and now with as little ceremony the king of Ethiopia goes forth to war against him, v. 9. They that do evil, woe be to them: the same may expect to be quarrelled with; and God sometimes cherishes the rage of his enemies by giving it a powerful diversion.

3. It is bad to talk proudly and profanely, but it
is worse to write, so, for that argues more deliberation and design, and what is written spreads further, last longer, and does the more mischief; atheism and irreligion, written, will certainly be reckoned for another day.

4. Great successes often burden sinners' hearts in their sinful ways, and make them the more daring. Because the kings of Assyria have destroyed all lands, (though, in fact, they were but a few that fell within their reach,) therefore they doubt not but to destroy God's land; because the gods of the nations were unable to help, they conclude the God of Israel is so; because the idolatrous kings of Hamath and Arpad became an easy prey to them, therefore the religious reforming king of Judah must needs be so too. Thus is the proud man ripened for ruin by the sunshine of prosperity.

5. Liberty of access to the throne of grace, and liberty of speech there, are the unspeakable privileges of the Lord's people at all times; especially in times of distress and danger. Hezekiah took Sennacherib's letter, and spread it before the Lord; not designing to make any complaints against him, but those grounded upon his own hand-writing. Let the thing speak itself, here is it in black and white; Open thin eyes, O Lord, and see. God allows his praying people to be humbly free with him, to utter all their words, as Jephthah did, before him, to speak as they would, whether of a friend or an enemy before him, and leave the contents, the concern of it, with him.

6. The great fundamental principles of our religion, applied by faith, and improved in prayer, will be of sovereign use to us in our particular exigencies and distresses, whatever they are; to them therefore we must have recourse, and abide by them; so Hezekiah did here. He encouraged himself with this, that the God of Israel is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts; of the hosts of Israel, to animate them; of the hosts of their enemies, to dispirit and restrain them; that he is God alone, and there is none that can stand in competition with him; that he is the God of all the kingdoms of the earth, and disposes of them all as he pleases, for he made heaven and earth, and therefore both can do any thing, and do every thing.

7. When we are afraid of men that are great destroyers, we may with humble boldness appeal to God as the great Saviour. They have indeed destroyed the nations, who had thrown themselves out of the protection of the true God by worshipping false gods; but the Lord, the God alone, is our God, our King, our Lawgiver, and he will save us, who is the Saviour of them that believe.

8. We have enough to take hold of, in our wrestling with God by prayer, if we can but plead that his glory is interested in our case; that his name will be profaned if we are run down, and glorified if we are relieved. Thence therefore will our most prevailing pleas be drawn; Do it for thy glory's sake.

21. Then Isaiah, the son of Amoz, sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria: 22. This is the word which the Lord hath spoken concerning him, The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. 23. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? Even against the Holy One of Israel. 24. By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof: and I will enter into the height of his border, and the forest of his Carmel. 25. I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my foot have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places. 26. Hast thou not heard long ago, how I have done it; and of ancient times that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldst be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps. 27. Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb; as the grass on the house-tops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up. 28. But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. 29. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears; therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way which thou camest. 30. And this shall be a sign unto thee, Yea shall eat this year such as growth of itself; and the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof. 31. And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward: 32. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this. 33. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. 34. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. 35. For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. 36. Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. 37. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. 38. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and
they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.

We may here observe,

1. That those who receive messages of terror from men with patience, and send messages of faith to God by prayer, may expect messages of peace and grace from God for their comfort, then when they are most cast down. Isaiah sent a long answer to Hezekiah’s prayer, in God’s name, sent it in writing, (for it was too long to be sent by word of mouth,) and sent it by way of return to his prayer, relation being thereunto added; “Whereas thou hast prayered to me, know, for thy comfort, that thy prayer is heard, and the messages of pity, and indulgence, and promises he had delivered, (particularly that, ch. 10.) and bid him pick out an answer from thence; but, that he might have abundant consolation, a message is sent him on purpose. The correspondence between earth and heaven is never let fall on God’s side.

2. Those who magnify themselves, especially who magnify themselves against God and his people, do really vilify themselves, and make themselves contemptible in the eyes of all wise men; The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised Sennacherib, and all his impotent malice and menaces; she knows that, while she preserves her integrity, she is sure of the divine protection, and that, though the enemy may bark, he cannot bite. All his threats and promises are but empty words, (v. 18.)

3. Those who abuse the people of God, affright God himself; and he takes what is said and done against them, as said and done against himself; “Whom hast thou reproached? Even the Holy One of Israel; whom thou hast therefore reproached, because he is a Holy One.” And it aggravated the indignity done to God, that he not only reproached him himself, but set himself to do it: By thy servants, the objects, thou hast reproached.

4. Those who boast of themselves and their own achievements, reflect upon God and his providence; “Thou hast said, I have digged, and drunk water. I have done mighty feats, and will do more;” and will not own that I did it to God, that he not only reproached him himself, but set himself to do it; By thy servants, the objects, thou hast reproached.

5. All the malice, and all the motions and projects, of the church’s enemies, are under the cognizance and check of the church’s God. Sennacherib was active and quick, here, and there, and everywhere, but God knew his going out and coming in, and had always an eye upon him, v. 28. And that was not all; he had a hand upon him too, a strict hand, a strong hand, a look to his nose, and a bridge of his lips, with which, though he was very hasty and unruly, he could and would turn him back by the way he came, v. 29. Hitherto he shall come, and no further. God had signed Sennacherib’s commission against Judah, (ch. x. 6.) here he superseded it; he has frightened them but he must not hurt them, and therefore is discharged from going any further; nor, his commission is now signed, by which he is clipped up, to answer for what he had done beyond his commission.

6. God is his people’s bountiful Benefactor, as well as their powerful Protector; both a Sun and a Shield to those who trust in him. Jerusalem shall be defended, (v. 35.) the besiegers shall not come into it, no, nor come before it, with any regular attack, but they shall be routed before they begin the siege, v. 33. But this is not all; God will return in mercy to his people, and will do them good. Their land shall be more than ordinarily fruitful, so that their losses shall be abundantly repaid; they shall not feel any of the ill effects either of the enemy’s wasting the country, or of their own being taken off from husbandry. But the earth, as at first, shall bring forth of itself, and they shall live, and live plentifully, upon its spontaneous productions. The blessing of the Lord can, when he pleases, make rich without the hand of the diligent. And let them not think that the desolations of their country would excuse them from observing the sabbatical year, which has been suspended the year after, and when they were not to plough or sow; no, though they had not now their usual stock beforehand for that year, yet they must religiously observe it, and depend upon God to provide for them. God must be trusted in the way of duty.

7. There is no standing before the judgments of God, when they come with commission. (1.) The greatest numbers cannot stand before them; one angel shall, in one night, lay a vast army of men dead upon the spot, when God commissions him so to do, v. 36. Here are 185,000 brave soldiers in an instant turned into so many dead corpses. Many think the 76th Psalm was penned upon occasion of this defect; where, from the spoiling of the stout-hearted, and sending them to sleep long sleep, (v. 5.) it is evident God’s people were thereby encouraged to magnify their excellent than the mountains of prey, (v. 4.) and that he, even he, is to be feared, v. 7. Angels are employed, more than we are aware of, as ministers of God’s justice, to punish the pride, and break the power, of wicked men. (2.) The greatest men cannot stand before them. The great king, the king of Assyria, looks very little, when he is forced to return, without his Russian horses, to accomplish what he had projected with so much assurance, but with terror and fear, lest the angel that had destroyed his army should destroy him; yet he is made to look less, when his own sons, who should have guarded him, sacrificed him to his idol, whose protection he sought, v. 57, 58. God can quickly spoil their breath, who breathe out threatenings and slaughters against his people; and covereth them with a cloud, when they have filled up the measure of their iniquity; and the Lord is known by these judgments which he executes, known to be a God that resists the proud. Many prophecies were fulfilled in this providence; which should encourage us, as far as they look further, and are designed as common and general assurances of the safety of the church and of all that trust in God, to depend upon God for the accomplishment of them. He that has delivered, doth and will. Lord, forgive our enemies; but, so let all thine enemies perish, O Lord.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

This chapter proceeds in the history of Hezekiah. Here is, I. His sickness, and the sentence of death he received within himself, v. 1. II. His prayer in his sickness, v. 2-8. III. The answer of God to his prayer, v. 8, 9. IV. The assurance of recovery which the answer of God gave him, v. 10-15. V. His return of thanks, v. 17, 18. VI. The answer of God to his return of thanks and his prayer in his recovery, v. 19, 20. VII. The answer of God to his prayer, aiming at receiving a crown of glory, and an everlasting kingdom, v. 21, 22. This is a chapter which will entertain the thoughts, direct the devotions, and encourage the faith and hopes, of those that are plagued and distressed. It visits those that are visited with sickness.

IN those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet, the
son of Amoz, came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thy house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live. 2. Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord. 3. And said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight: and Hezekiah wept sore. 4. Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying, 5. Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. 6. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city. 7. And this shall be a sign unto thee from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he hath spoken; 8. Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sundial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.

We may hence observe, among others, these good lessons: 1. That neither men's greatness nor their goodness will exempt them from the arrests of sickness and death. Hezekiah, a mighty potentate on earth, and a mighty favourite of Heaven, is struck with a disease, which, without a miracle, will certainly be mortal; and this, in the midst of his days, his comforts, and usefulness. Lord, behold, he whom thou lov'st is sick. It should seem, this sickness seized him when he was in the midst of his triumphs over the ruined army of the Assyrians, to teach us always to rejoice with trembling. 2. It concerns us to prepare, when we see death approaching. The body is diseased, and thy heart especially put both thine affections and thine affections into the best posture thou canst, that, when thy Lord comes, then mayest be found of him in peace with God, with thy own conscience, and with all men, and mayest have nothing else to do but to die.” Our being ready for death will make it come never the sooner, but much the more easily: and those that are fit to die are most fit to live. 3. Is any afflicted with sickness? Let him pray, James v. 13. Prayer is a salve for every sore, personal or public; when Hezekiah was distressed by his enemies, he prayed; now that he was sick, he prayed. Whither should the child go, when any thing ails him, but to his Father? Afflictions are sent to bring us to our Bibles and to our knees. When Hezekiah was in health, he went up to the house of the Lord, to pray, for that was then the house of prayer. When he was sick in bed, he turned his face toward the wall; probably, toward the temple, which was a type of Christ, to whom we must look by faith in every prayer. 4. The testimony of our consciences for us, that by the grace of God we have lived a good life, and have walked closely and humbly with God, will be a great support and comfort to us when we come to look death in the face. And though we may not depend upon it as our righteousness, by which to be justified before God, yet we may humbly plead it as an evidence of our interest in the righteousness of the Mediator. Hezekiah does not demand a reward from God for his good services, but modestly begs that God would remember, not how he had re-formed the kingdom, taken away the high-places, cleansed the temple, and revived neglected ordinances; but, which was better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices, how he had approved himself to God with a single eye and an honest heart, not only in these eminent performances, but in an even regular course of holy living: I have walked before thee in truth and sincerity, and with a perfect, that is, an upright, heart; for uprightness is our gospel perfection. 5. God has a gracious ear open to the prayers of his afflicted people. The same prophet that was sent to Hezekiah, who was not sent to speak to God, is sent to him with a promise that he shall not only recover, or be restored to a confirmed state of health, but live fifteen years yet. As Jerusalem was dis tressed, so Hezekiah was diseased, that God might have the glory of the deliverance of both, and that prayer too might have the honour of being instrumental in the deliverance. When we pray in our sickness, though God send not to us such an answer as he here sent to Hezekiah, yet, if by his Spirit he bids us be of good cheer, assures us that our sins are forgiven us, that his grace shall be sufficient for us, and that, whether we live or die, we shall be his, we have no reason to say that we pray in vain. God answers us, if he strengthen us with strength in our souls, though not with bodily strength, Ps. cxxxvii. 3. A good health does not take much comfort to us, it is his own health and prosperity, unless withal he see the welfare and prosperity of the church of God. Therefore God, knowing what lay near Hezekiah’s heart, promised him not only that he should live, but that he should see the good of Jerusalem all the days of his life, (Ps. cxxxviii. 5.) otherwise he could not live comfortably. Jerusalem, which is now delivered, shall still be defended from the Assyrian, who perhaps threatened to rally again, and renew the attack. Thus does God graciously provide to make Hezekiah upon all accounts easy. 7. God is willing to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, that they may have an unshaken faith in it, and therewith a strong consolation. God has given Hezekiah repeated assurance of his favour; and yet, as if all were thought too little, that he might expect from him uncommon favours, a sign is given him, an uncommon sign—none that we know of having had an absolute promise of living a certain number of years to come, as Hezekiah had. God thought fit to confirm this unprecedented favour with a miracle. The sign was the going back of the shadow upon the sun dial; the sun is a faithful measure of time, and reje cts as a strong man to run a race; but he that set that clock agoing can set it back, when he pleases, and make it to return; for the Father of all lights is the Direction of them. 9. The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness: 10. I said, in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years. 11. I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. 12. Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life, he will cut me off with pining sickness from day even to night wilt thou make an
end of me. 13. I reckoned till morning, hal, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. 14. Like a crane, or a swallow, so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me. 15. What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul. 16. O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live. 17. Behold, for peace I had great bitterness; but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. 18. For the grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. 19. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth. 20. The Lord was ready to save me: therefore will I sing my songs to the strung instruments, all the days of my life, in the house of the Lord. 21. For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover. 22. Hezekiah also had said, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord? We have here Hezekiah's thanksgiving-song, which he penned, by divine direction, after his recovery. He might have taken some of the psalms of his father David, and have made use of them for his purpose; but he might have found many very pertinent lines, in the LXX. He quoted the Levites to himself, "The Lord with the words of David," 2 Chron. xxix. 30. But the occasion here was extraordinary, and, his heart being full of devout affections, he would not confine himself to the compositions he had, though of divine inspiration, but would offer up his affections in his own words, which is most natural and genuine. He put this thanksgiving in writing, that he might review it himself afterward, for the reviving of the good impressions made upon him by this providence, and that it might be recommended to others also for their use upon the like occasion. Note, There are writings which it is proper for us to draw up after we have been sick and are recovered. It is good to write a memoir of the afflictions, of the frame of our hearts under it; to keep a record of the thoughts we had of things when we were sick, the affections that were then working in us; to write a memoir of the mercies of a sick bed, and of our release from it, that they may never be forgotten; to write a thanksgiving to God, write a sure covenant with him, and seal it: give it under our hands, that we will never return again to folly. It is an excellent writing which Hezekiah here left upon his recovery; and yet we find (2 Chron. xxxiii. 23.) that he rendered not again according to the benefit done to him. The impressions, one would have thought, should never have worn off, and yet, it seems, they did. Thanksgiving is good, but thanksgiving is better.

Now, in this writing, he preserves upon record, 1. The deplorable condition he was in when his disease prevailed, and his despair of recovery, v. 10—13. He tells us what his thoughts were of himself, when he was at the worst; and these he keeps in remembrance; 1. As blaming himself for his despondency, and that he gave up himself for gone; whereas, while there is life, there is hope, and room for our prayers. God's word is to consider sickness as a summons to the grave, so as thereby to be quickened in our preparation for another world, yet we ought not to make the worst of our case, nor to think that every sick man must needs be quickly a dead man. He that brings low, can raise up. Or, 2. As reminding himself of the apprehensions he had of death approaching, that he might always know and consider his own mortality, and that, though he had a repreive for fifteen years, it was but a repreive, and the fatal stroke he had now such a dread of would certainly come at last. Or, 3. As magnifying the power of God in recovering him when his case was desperate, and his goodness in being so much better to him than his own fears. Thus David sometimes, when he was delivered out of trouble, reflected upon the black and melancholy conclusions he had made upon his own case when he was in trouble, and what he had then said in his haste, as Ps. xxxi. 22—lxxvii. 7—9.

Let us see what Hezekiah's thoughts of himself were; 1. He reckoned that the number of his months was cut off in the midst: he was now about thirty-nine or forty years of age, and when he had a fair prospect of many years and happy ones, very happy, very many, before him. This distresser that suddenly seized him, he concluded would be the cutting off his days; that he should now be deprived of the residue of his years, which, in a coarse of nature, he might have lived; not which he could command as a debt due to him, but which he had reason to expect, considering the strength of his constitution; and with them he should be deprived not only of the comforts of life, but of all the opportunities he had of serving God and his generation. To the same purport, (v. 12.) "Mine age is departed and gone, and is removed from me as a shepherd is from his flock, and I am cut off in the prime of my days," which is the pulling of it down in an instant. Our present residence is but like that of a shepherd in his tent, a poor, mean, and cold lodging, where we are upon duty, and with a trust committed to our charge, as the shepherd has, of which we must give an account, and which will easily be taken down by the threshing of one pin or two. But observe, It is not the final period of our age, but only the removal of it to another world, where the tents of Kedar that are taken down, coarse, black, and weather-beaten, shall be set up again in the New Jerusalem, comely as the curtains of Solomon. He adds another similitude; I have cut off, like a weaver, my life. Not that he did by any act of his own cut off the thread of his life; his being brought into fatigues, and constrained, as he was forced to cut off all his designs and projects, his purposes were broken off, even the thoughts of his heart, as Job's were, ch. xvii. 11. Our days are compared to the weaver's shuttle, (Job vii. 6.) passing and repassing very swiftly, every throw leaving a thread behind it; and when they are finished, the thread is cut off, and the piece taken out of the loom, and showed to our Master, to be judged of whether it be well woven or no, that we may receive according to the things done in the body. But, as the weaver, when he has cut off his threads, has done his work, and the thread is over, so a good man, when his life is cut off, his cares and fatigues are cut off with it, and he rests from his labours. But
did I say, I have cut off my life? No, my times are not in mine own hand, they are in God’s hand, and it is he that will cut me off from the throrn; so the margin reads it; he has appointed what shall be the length of the piece, and, when it comes to that length, he will cut it off.

2. He reckoned that he should go to the gates of the grave; to的传统, the gates of which he always saw, is that it is still crying, Give, give. The grave is here put not only for the sepulchres of his fathers, in which his body would be deposited with a great deal of pomp and magnificence, (for he was buried in the chief of the sepulchres of the kings, and all Judah did him honour at his death, 2 Chron. xxxii. 33.) which yet he himself took no care of, nor gave any direction to be done for them; but he was left to the state of the dead, that is the sheol, the hades, the invisible world, to which he saw his soul going.

3. He reckoned that he was deprived of all the opportunities he might have had of worshipping God, and doing good, in the world; (v. 11.) “I said,” [1.] “I shall not see the Lord, as he manifests himself in his temple, in his oracles and ordinances, even the Lord here in the land of the living.” He had but to see him out of the dead, and mark an end of him—death, the deserts of seeing him any more on this side death, as he had seen him in the sanctuary, Ps. lxix. 2. He shall no more see, (serve) the Lord in the land of the living, the land of conflict between his kingdom and the kingdom of Satan, this seat of war. He dwells much upon this; I shall no more see the Lord, even the Lord; for a good man wishes not to live any longer; he goes to see death, and have communion with him. [2.] I shall see man no more. He shall see his subjects no more, whom he may protect, and administer justice to; shall see no more objects of charity, whom he may relieve; shall see his friends no more, who were often sharpened by his countenance, as iron is by iron. Death puts an end to conversation, and removes our acquaintance into darkness, Ps. lxxxviii. 18.

4. He reckoned that the agonies of death would be very sharp and severe; “He will cut me off with pining sickness, which will waste me, and wear me off, quickly.” The distemper increased so fast, without intermission or remission, either day or night, morning or evening, that he concluded it would soon come to a crisis, and make an end of him—that God, whose servants all diseases are, would by them, as a lion, break all his bones with grinding pain, v. 13. He thought that next morning was the utmost he could expect to live in such pain and misery; when he had outlived the first day’s illness, the second day he repented his fears, and concluded that this must needs be his last night; From day even to night will thou make an end of me. When we are sick, we are very apt to be thus calculating our time, and, after all, we are still at uncertainty. It should be more our care how we shall get safe to another world, than how long we are likely to live in this world.

11. The complaints he made in this condition; (v. 14.) “Like a crane, or swallow, so did I chatter; I made a noise as those birds do when they are friends. See that a crane’s sickness makes a little time; he that, but the other day, spake with so much freedom and majesty, now, through the extremity of pain, or deficiency of spirits, chatters like a crane, or swallow. Some think he refers to his praying in his affliction; it was so broken and interrupted with groanings which could not be uttered, that all he could say was, like the chattering of a crane, or swallow, than what it used to be. Such are the thoughts he had of his own prayers, which were yet acceptable to God, and successful. He mourned like a dove, sadly, but silently and patiently. He had found God ready so far to answer his prayers at other times, that he could not but look upward, in expectation of some relief now; but in vain, his eyes failed, and he saw no hopeful symptom, nor felt any abatement of his distemper; and therefore he prays, *I am oppressed, quite overpowercd, and ready to sink; Lord, undertake for me, heal me out of the land of the living; I am not in the state of the dead, for thy servant for good, Ps. cxix. 122. Come between me and the gates of the grave, to which I am ready to be hurried.* When we recover from sickness, the divine pity does, as it were, begin a day for us, and undertake we shall be forthcoming another time, and answer the debt in full. And when we receive the sentence of death within ourselves, we are undone, if this disease has not removed us to carry us through the valley of the shadow of death, and to preserve us blameless to the heavenly kingdom on the other side of it—if Christ do not undertake for us, to bring us off in the judgment, and present us to his Father, and to do all that for us, which we need, and cannot do for ourselves, I am oppressed, ease me; so some read it; for when we are agitated by a sense of guilt, and the fear of death, nothing will make us easy but Christ’s undertaking for us.

III. The grateful acknowledgment he makes of God’s goodness to him in his recovery. He begins this part of writing as one at a stand how to express himself; (v. 15.) *What shall I say? Why should I say so much by way of complaint, when this is enough to silence all my complaints—He has spoken to us to carry us through the valley of the shadow of death, and to preserve us blameless to the heavenly kingdom on the other side of it—if Christ do not undertake for us, to bring us off in the judgment, and present us to his Father, and to do all that for us, which we need, and cannot do for ourselves, I am oppressed, ease me;* so some read it; for when we are agitated by a sense of guilt, and the fear of death, nothing will make us easy but Christ’s undertaking for us.

1. He promises himself always to retain the impressions of his affliction; (v. 15.) *I will go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul; as one in sorrow for my sinful distrusts and murmuring under my affliction; as one in care to make suitable returns for God’s favour to me, and to make it appear that I have not forsaken him. The affliction which I have been under. I will go softly, gravely, and considerately, and with thought and deliberation, not as many, who, when they are recovered, live as carelessly, and as much at large, as ever; Or, I will go pleasantly; (so some understand it:) when God has delivered me, I will walk cheerfully with him in all holy conversation, as having tasted that he is gracious. Or, I will go softly, that is, mournfully, in the bitterness of my soul for my sins. Or, I will go softly, even after the bitterness of my soul; (so it may be read;) when the trouble is over, I will endeavour to retain the impression of it, and to have the same thoughts of things that I had then.*

2. He will encourage himself, and others, with the expectation he had had of the goodness of God; (v. 16.) *By these things which thou hast done for me, they live, the kingdom lives;* (for the life of such a king was the life of the kingdom;) *all that hear of it shall live and be comforted; by the same power and goodness that have recovered me, all men have their souls held in life, and they ought to acknowledge it. In all these things is the life of my spirit, my spiritual life, that is supported and maintained by what God has done for the preservation of my natural life.* The more we taste of the loving-kindness of God in every providence, the more will our hearts be enlarged to love him,
and live to him, and that will be the life of our spirit. Thus our souls live, and they shall praise him. He magnifies the mercy of his recovery, on several accounts.

1. That he was raised up from great extremity; (v. 5.) Before, for peace I had great bitterness. When upon the defeat of Sennacherib, he expected nothing but an uninterrupted peace to himself and his government, he was suddenly seized with sickness, which imbibed all his comforts to him, and went to that height, that it seemed to be the bitterness of death itself, bitterness, bitterness, nothing but gall and wormwood. This was his condition, when he was upon a seasonable call to repentance.

2. That it came from the love of God, from love to his soul. Some are spared, and reproved, in wrath, that they may be reserved for some greater judgment when they have filled up the measure of their iniquities; but temporal mercies are then sweet indeed to us, when we can taste the love of God in them; he delivered me because he delighted in me; (Ps. xcviii. 19.) and the word here signifies a very affectionate love; Thou hast loved my soul from the pit of corruption; so it runs in the original. God's love is sufficient to bring a soul from the pit of corruption. This is applicable to our redemption by Christ; it was in love to our souls, our poor perishing souls, that he delivered them from the bottomless pit, smothed them as broad as a great sea, he cast down Ararat, and in his pity he redeemed us; and the preservation of our bodies, and the provision made for them, are then doubly comfortable, when it is in love to our souls; when God repairs the house because he has a kindness for the inhabitant.

3. That it was the effect of the pardon of sin; For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back, and taken them away,以致 his soul, with all who set them against him, before his face, and is ready to reckon for them; but when we set them before our face in true repentance, as David did when his sin was ever before him, God casts them behind his back. [2.] When God pardons sin, he casts it behind his back, as not designing to look upon it with an eye of justice and jealousy; he remembers it no more, to visit for it; the pardon does not make the sin not to have been, or not to have been sin, but not to be punished as it deserves. When we cast our sins behind our back, and take hold of most to repent of them, God sets them before his face, and is ready to reckon for them; but when we set them before our face in true repentance, as David did when his sin was ever before him, God casts them behind his back. [2.] When God pardons sin, he pardons all, casts them all behind his back, though they have been as scarlet and crimson: [3.] The pardoning of the sin is the delivering of the soul from the pit of corruption, (v. 4.) It is then pleasant to think of recoveries from sickness, when we see them flowing from the remission of sin; then the cause is removed, and then it is in love to the soul.

4. That it was the lengthening out of his opportunity to glorify God in this world; which he made the business and pleasure and end of life. Hezekiah, though he had a period to that course of service for the glory of God, and the good of the church, which he now was pursuing, v. 18. Heaven indeed praises God, and the souls of the faithful, when at death they remove thither, do that work of heaven as angels, and with the angels, there; but what is this world the better for that? What does his heart contribute to the support and advancement of God's kingdom among men in this state of struggle? The grave cannot praise God, nor the dead bodies that lie there; death cannot celebrate him, cannot proclaim his perfections and favours, to invite others into his service. They who go down to the pit, being no longer in a state of probation, nor living by faith in his promises, cannot give him honour by hoping for his truth. They that lie resting in the grave, as they are not capable of receiving any further mercy from God, so neither are they capable of offering any more praises to him, till they shall be raised at the last day, and then they shall both receive and give glory.

[2.] Being recovered from it, he resolves not only to proceed, but to abound, in praising and serving God; (v. 19.) The living, the living, he shall praise thee. They may do it, they have an opportunity of praising God; and that is the main thing that makes life valuable and desirable to a good man. Hezekiah was therefore glad to live, not that he might continue his enjoyment of his royal dignity, and the Arabia, and pleasure of his life, but that he might continue to praise God. The living must praise God; they live in vain, if they do not. They that have been dying, and yet are living, whose life is from the dead, are in a special manner obliged to praise God, as being most sensibly affected with his goodness. Hezekiah for his part, being recovered from this sickness, will make it his business to praise God; "I do it this day, and therefore do I in like manner." They that give good exhortations should set good examples, and do themselves what they expect from others; "For my part," says Hezekiah, "the Lord was ready to save me; he not only did save me, but he was ready to do it, just then when I was in the greatest extremity; did help me, cast out his enemies, and in his pity he redeemed us; and the preservation of our bodies, and the provision made for them, are then doubly comfortable, when it is in love to our souls; when God repairs the house because he has a kindness for the inhabitant.

First, I will publish and proclaim his praise. I and my family, I and my friends, I and my people, will have a concert of praise to his glory; we will sing my song to the stringed instruments, that others may be affected with them, when they are in the most devout and serious frame in the house of the Lord. It is for the honour of God, and the edification of his church, that special mercies should be acknowledged in public praises, especially mercies to public persons, Ps. cxxvi. 18, 19.

Secondly, I will proceed and persevere in his praises. We should do it all the days of our life, because every day of our life is itself a fresh mercy, and brings many fresh mercies along with it; and as renewed mercies call for renewed praises, so former eminent mercies call for repeated praises. It is by the mercy of God that we live, and therefore as long as we live, we must continue to praise him, while we have breath, nay while we have being.

Thirdly, I will propagate and perpetuate his praises. We should not only do it all the days of our life, but the father to the children should make known his truth, that the ages to come may give God the glory of his truth by trusting to it. It is the duty of parents to possess their children with a confidence in the truth of God, which will go far toward keeping them close to the ways of God. Hezekiah, as we see, did not himself, and therefore shall here only observe two lessons from them.

1. That God's promises are intended not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, the use of means; Hezekiah is sure to recover, and yet he must take a lump of figs, and lay it on the boil, v. 21. We do not trust God, but tempt him, if, when
we pray to him for help, we do not second our prayers with our endeavours. We must not put physicians, or physic, in the place of God, but make use of them in subordination to God and to his providence; help thyself, and God will help thee.

2. That the chief end we should aim at, in desiring life and health, is, that we may glorify God, and prove ourselves in knowledge, and grace, and meekness for heaven. Hezekiah, when he meant, What is the sign that I shall recover? asked, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord, there to honour God, to keep up acquaintance and communion with him, and to encourage others to serve him, v. 22. It is taken for granted that if God would restore him to health, he would immediately perform the temple with his thank-offerings; there Christ found the impotent man whom he had healed, John v. 14. The exercises of religion are so much the business and delight of a good man, that to be restrained from them is the greatest grievance of his afflictions, and to be restored to them is the greatest comfort of his deliverances. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee.

CHAP. XXXIX.

The story of this chapter likewise we had before, 2 Kings xx. 12, &c. It is here repeated, not only as a very melancholy passage, but because it concludes with a prophecy of the captivity in Babylon; and as the former part of the prophecies of this book frequently referred to Sennacherib's invasion and the defeat of that, to which therefore the history of that was very fully subjoined, so the latter part of this book speaks much of the Jews' captivity in Babylon and their deliverance out of that, to which therefore the first predictions, it is said, do no more than occasion a very fine prefixed. We have here, I. The pride and folly of Hezekiah, in showing his treasures to the king of Babylon's ambassadors that were sent to congratulate him on his recovery, v. 1, 2. II. Isaiah's examination of him, concerning him, in God's name, and his confession of it, v. 3, 4. III. The sentence passed upon him for it, that all his treasures should, in process of time, be carried to Babylon, v. 5., 7. IV. Hezekiah's penitent and patient submission to this sentence, v. 8.

1. At that time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered. 2. And Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not. 3. Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon. 4. Then said he, What have they seen in thy house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in my house have they seen; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them.

Hence we may learn these lessons,

1. That humanity and common civility teach us to rejoice with our friends and neighbours when they rejoice, and to congratulate them on their deliverances, and particularly their recoveries from sickness. The king of Babylon, having heard that Hezekiah had been sick, and was recovered, sent to conjunct him upon the occasion. If Christians be unnecessarily, heathens will shame them.

2. It becomes us to give honour to those whose God puts honour upon. The sun was the Babylonians' god; and when they understood that it was with a respect to Hezekiah that the sun, to their great surprise, went back ten degrees, on such a day, they thought themselves obliged to do Hezekiah all the honour they could. Will all people thus walk in the name of their God, and shall they not be blessed?

3. Those that do not value good men for their goodness, may yet be brought to pay them respect by other inducements, and for the sake of their secular interests. The king of Babylon made his court to Hezekiah here, not because he was pious, but because he was prosperous; as the Philistines coveted an alliance with Isaac, because they saw the Lord was with him, Gen. xxvi. 29. The king of Babylon was an enemy to the king of Assyria, and therefore was fond of Hezekiah, because the Assyrians were so much weakened by the power of his God.

4. It is a hard matter to keep the spirit low in the midst of great advancements. Hezekiah is an instance of it: he was a wise and good man; but when one ambassador was arrived, and in his favour, he found it hard to keep his heart from being lifted up, nay a little thing then drew them into the snare of pride. Blessed Paul himself needed a thorn in the flesh, to keep him from being lifted up with the abundance of revelations.

5. We have need to watch over our own spirits, when we are showing our friends our possessions, what we have done, and what we have got, that we be not proud of them, as if our might or our merit had purchased and procured us this wealth. When we look upon our enjoyments, and have occasion to speak of them, it must be with humble acknowledgments of our own unworthiness, and thankful acknowledgments of God's goodness, with a just value for the achievements of others, and with an expectation of losses and changes: not dreaming that our own part stands so strong but that it may soon be moved.

6. It is a great weakness for good men to value themselves much upon the civil respects that are paid them (yea, though there be something particular and uncommon in them,) by the children of this world, and to be fond of their acquaintance. What a poor thing was it for Hezekiah, whom God had so desired, to be thus over-proud of the respect paid him by a heathen prince, as if those added any thing to him! We ought to return the courtesies of such with interest, but not to be proud of them.

7. We must expect to be called to an account for the workings of our pride, though they be secret, and in such instances as we thought there was no hand in, and therefore we ought not to be afraid of the truth to an account for them; and when we have had company with us, that have paid us respect, and been pleased with their entertainment, and commended every thing, we ought to be jealous of ourselves, with a godly jealousy, lest our hearts have been lifted up. As far as we see cause to expect that this sly and subtle sin of pride has insinuated itself into our breasts, and mingleth itself in our conversation, let us be ashamed of it, and as Hezekiah here, ingenuously confess it, and take shame to ourselves for it.
3. Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord of hosts; 6. Behold, the days come, that all that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. 7. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. 3. Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken: he said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

Hence let us observe,
1. That if God love us, he will humble us, and will find some way or other to pull down our spirits when they are lifted up above measure. A mortifying message is sent to Hezekiah, that he might be humbled for the height of his heart, and be convinced of the folly of it; for though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, as he did Hezekiah here, to prove him, that he might know all that was in his heart, yet he will not suffer them to lie still in it.
2. It is just with God to take that from us, which we make the matter of our pride, and on which we build a carnal confidence. When David was proud of the numbers of his people, God took a course to make them fewer; and when Hezekiah boasts of his treasures, and looks upon them with too great a complacency, he is told that he acts like the foolish traveller, who shows his money and gold to one that proves a thief, and is thereby tempted to rob him.
3. If we could but see things that will be, we should be ashamed of our thoughts of things that are. If Hezekiah had known that the seed and successors of this king of Babylon would hereafter be the ruin of his family and kingdom, he would not have complimented his ambassadors as he did. And when the prophet told him that he would be so, we may well imagine how he was vexed at himself for what he had done. We cannot certainly foretell future events, we are too far removed, too hasty, too vain, and therefore it is vanity for us to take complacency, and put confidence, in any thing that goes under that character.
4. Those that are fond of an acquaintance and alliance with irreligious men, first or last will have enough of it, and will have cause to repent it. Hezekiah thought himself happy in the friendship of Babylon, though it was the mother of idols and idolatries; but Babylon, who now courted Jerusalem, in process of time conquered her, and carried her captive. Leagues with sinners, and leagues with sin too, will end thus; it is therefore our wisdom to keep at a distance from them.
5. Those that truly repent of their sins will take it well to be reproved for them, and will be willing to be told of their faults. Hezekiah received the word of the Lord good, which discovered sin to him, and made him sensible that he had done amiss, which before he was not aware of. The language of true penitents is, *Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness*; and the law is therefore good, because, being spiritual, in it sin appears sin, and excites genuine sin.
6. True penitents will quietly submit, not only to the reproofs of the word, but to the rebukes of Providence, for their sins. When Hezekiah was told of the punishment of his iniquity, he said, *Good is the word of the Lord, not only the mitigation of the sentence, but the sentence itself; he has nothing to object against the equity of it, but says, *Amen, to the threatenings*. Hezekiah considered the evil of sin, and what it deserves, will justify God in all that is brought upon them for it, and own that he punishes them less than their iniquities deserve.

7. Though we must not be regardless of those that come after us, yet we must reckon ourselves well done for, if there be peace and truth in our days, and better than we had reason to expect; if a storm be coming, we must not be surprised to get into the harbour before it comes, and he gathered to the grave in peace; yet we can never be secure of this, but must prepare for changes in our own time, that we may stand complete in all the will of God, and bid it welcome, whatever it is.

**CHAP. XL.**

At this chapter begins the latter part of the prophecy of this book, which is not only divided from the former by the historical chapters that come between, but seems to be distinguished from it in the scope and style of it. In the former part, the name of the prophet was frequently prefixed, and he is particular in his prophecies; but in this title; (as ch. ii. 1. ch. vii. 3. ch. xiii. 1.) but this is all one continued discourse, and the prophet not so much as once named. That consisted of many burthens, many woes of many hands, and the distress which the people of God were in by the Assyrian, and their deliverance out of that, were chiefly prophesied of; but that is here spoken of as a thing past, (ch. iv. 4.) and the captivity of Babylon, and the bringing them into that, which were much greater events, of more extensive and abiding concern, are here largely foretold. Before God sent his people into captivity, he furnished them with precious promises for their support and comfort in their trouble; and we may well imagine of what great use to them the glorious, gracious light of this prophecy was, in that cloudy and dark day, and how much it helped to try upon their faith and patience of Babylon. But it looks further yet, and to greater things; much of Christ and gospel-grace we meet with in the foregoing part of this book, but in this latter part we shall find much more of these; for if it were for the sake of any summary in the New Testament, it begins with that which begins the gospels, *The voice of one crying in the wilderness, (ch. xl. 3.)* and concludes with that which concludes the book of the Revelation, *The new heavens and the new earth, ch. lxvi. 22.* Even Mr. White acknowledges, that as all the mercies of God to the Jewish nation bore some resemblance to those glorious things performed for the Israel of God, so all the prophecies of the Old Testament, they are by the spirit of God expressed in such terms as show plainly, that while the prophet is speaking of the redemption of the Jews, he had in his thoughts a more glorious and extensive design; and we need not look for any further accomplishment of these prophecies yet to come; for if Jesus be He, and his kingdom be it, that should come, we are to look for no other, but the caricature and completing of the same blessed work which was begun in the first preaching and planting of Christianity in the world.

In this chapter, we have, I. Orders given to preach and publish the glad tidings of redemption, ch. 1. 2. 11. These glad tidings introduced by a voice in the wilderness, which gives assurance that all obstructions shall be removed; (v. 3. 5.) and that though all creatures fail and fade, all the works of God shall be accomplished and accomplished, v. 6. 8. 11. A joyful prospect given to the people of God of the happiness which this redemption should bring along with it, v. 9. 11. The sovereignty and power of that God magnified, who undertakes to work out this redemption, v. 12. 17. V. Idols therefore triumphed over, and idolaters upbraided with their folly, v. 18. 26. VI. A reproof given to the people of God, and their failings and incompetencies, and enough said, in a few words, to silence the lovers of war, v. 27. 31. And we, through patience and comfort of this scripture, may have hope.

1. **COMFORT ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.** 2. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her
iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

We have here the commission and instructions given not to this prophet only, but, with him, to all the Lord's prophets, and to all Christ's ministers, to proclaim comfort to God's people. 1. This did not only warrant, but enjoin this prophet to comfort his people; all his predecessors, who could not but have very melancholy apprehensions of things, when they saw Judah and Jerusalem by their daring impieties reping space for ruin, and God in his providence starving ruin upon them. Let them be sure that, for all this, God had mercy in store for them. 2. It was especially a direction to the prophets that should live in the Babylonish exile, and to the Jews there; and this express commanding of them should encourage the captives to hope for enlargement in due time. 3. Gospel-ministers, being employed by the blessed Spirit as comforters, and as helpers of the joy of Christians, are here put in mind of their business. Here we have,

(1.) Comfortable words directed to God's people in general. 1. The prophets have instructions from their God (for he is the Lord God of the holy prophets, Rev. xxii. 26.) to comfort the people of God; and the charge is doubled, *Comfort ye, comfort ye—* not because the prophets are unwilling to do it, (ne, it is the most pleasant part of their work,) but because sometimes the souls of God's people refuse to be comforted, and their comforters must repeat things again and again, 'till they can form anything upon them. Observe here, [1.] There are a people in the world, that are God's people. [2.] It is the will of God that his people should be comforted people, even in the worst of times. [3.] It is the work and business of ministers to do what they can for the comfort of God's people. [4.] Words of conviction, such as we had in the former part of this book, must be followed with words of comfort, such as we have here; for he that has torn will heal us.

(2.) Comfortable words directed to Jerusalem in particular; "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem;" (v. 2.) speak that which will revive her heart, and be a cordial to her, and to all that belong to her and wish her well. Do not whisper it, but cry aloud, to show saints their comforts as well as the sinners their transgressions, not how to hear it; [1.] "That the days of her trouble are numbered and finished; her warfare is accomplished, the set time of her servitude; the campaign is now at an end, and she shall retire into quarters of refreshment." Human life is a warfare; (Job vii. 1.) the Christian life much more; but the struggle will not last always, the warfare will be accomplished, and then the good soldiers shall rest in the enjoyment of their pay. [2.] "That the cause of her trouble is removed, and, when that is taken away, the effect will cease. Tell her that her iniquity is pardoned, God is reconciled to her, and she shall no longer be treated as one guilty before him." Nothing can be spoken more comfortably than this, *Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee.* (Luke ix. 2.) But, if she does not enjoy her love, but her sin is pardoned, [3.] "That the end of her trouble is answered; She has received of the Lord double for the cure of all her sins, sufficient, and more than sufficient, to part between her and her idols," the worship of which was the great sin for which God had a controversy with them, and from which he designed to reclaim them by their captivity in Babylon, and to effect many of them, in the open face of them a rooted antipathy to idolatry, and was physic doubly strong for the purging out of that iniquity. Or, it may be taken as the guage of the divine compassion; *His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel, ( Judges x. 16.) and, like a tender father, since he spake against them, he earnestly remembered them,* (Jer. xxx.: 20.) and was ready to say that he had given them too much correction. They, being very penitent, acknowledged that God had punished them less than their iniquities deserved; but he, being very pitiful, owned, in a manner, that he had punished them more than they deserved. True penitents have indeed, in Christ and his sufferings, received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins; for the satisfaction Christ made by his death was of such an infinite value, that it was more than double to the demerits of sin; for God spared not his own Son.

3. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: 5. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. 6. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: 7. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. 3. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

The time to prepare Zion, in the set time, being come, the people of God must be prepared, by repentance and faith, for the favours designed them; and, in order to call them to these, we have here the voice of one crying in the wilderness, which may be applied to these prophets who were with the captives in their wilderness-state, and who, when they saw the day of their deliverance dawn, called earnestly upon them to prepare for it, and assured them that all the difficulties which stood in the way of their deliverance would be removed. It is a good sign that mercy is preparing for us, if we find God's grace preparing us for it, Ps. x. 17. But it must be applied to John the Baptist; for though God was the Speaker, he was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, and his business was, to prepare the way of the Lord, to dispose men's minds for the reception and entertainment of the gospel of Christ. The way of the Lord is prepared.

1. By repentance for sin; that was it which John Baptist preached to all Judah and Jerusalem, (Matt. iii. 2, 5,) and thereby made ready a people prepared for the Lord, Luke i. 17. The alarm is given, let all take notice of it at their peril; God is coming in a way of mercy, and we must prepare for him, v. 2—5. If we apply it to their captivity, it may be applied to us to receive Christ and his gospel; "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; prepare yourselves for him, and let all that be suppressed which would be an obstruction to his entrance; make room for
Christ. Make straight a highway for him." If he prepare the end for us, we ought surely to prepare the way for God; "I will open your heads, O ye gates." Ps. xxiv. 7, 8. Prepare for the salvation, the great salvation, and other lesser deliverances. Let us get to be fit for them, and then God will work them out. Let us not stand in our own light, nor put a bar in our own door, but heal, or make, a highway for him, even in that which is his desert ground. This is that for which he has to do.

2. We must get our hearts levelled by divine grace. Those that were hindered from comfort in Christ by their dejections and despondencies, are the valleys that must be exalted. Those that are hindered from comfort in Christ by a proud conceit of their own merit and worth, are the mountains and hills that must be made low. Those that have entertained prejudices against the word and ways of God, that are intractable, and disposed to thwart and contradict even that which is plain and easy, because it agrees not with their corrupt inclinations and secular interests, are the crooked that must be made straight, and the rough places that must be made plain. Let but the gospel of Christ have a fair opportunity, and let us continue in faith and grace, we shall prepare the way of the Lord; and thus God will be by his grace prepare his own way in all the vessels of mercy, whose heart he opens as he did Lydia's.

And when this is done, the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, v. 5. (1.) When the captives are prepared for deliverance, Cyrus shall proclaim it, and they shall have the benefit of it, and they only, though he be only a king, shall prepare it by courage and resolution to break through the discouragements that lay in their way, and to make nothing of the hills, and valleys, and all the rough places.

(2.) When John Baptist has for some time preached repentance, mortification, and reformation, and so made ready a people prepared for the Lord, (Luke i. 77.) then the Messiah himself shall be revealed in his glory, working miracles, which John did not, and by his grace, which is his glory, binding up and healing with consolations those whom John had wounded with convictions. And this revelation of divine glory shall be a light to lighten the Gentiles; All flesh shall see it together, and not the Jews only; they shall see and admire it, see it, and bid it welcome; as the return out of captivity was taken notice of by all the nations, Ps. cxlviii. 8. And it shall be the accomplishment of the word of God, not one iota, or title of which shall fail to the ground; The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, and therefore the hand of the Lord will effect it.

II. By confidence in the word of the Lord, and not in any creature: the mouth of the Lord having spoken it, the voice has thus the power of God, (he that has ears to hear, let him hear it,) The word of our God shall stand for ever, v. 8.

1. By this accomplishment of the prophecies and promises of salvation, and the performance of them to the utmost in due time, it appears that the word of the Lord is sure, and what may be safely relied on. Then we are prepared for deliverance, when we depend entirely upon the word of God, build our hopes on that, with an assurance that it will not make us ashamed: in a dependence upon this word, we must be brought to own that all flesh is grass, withering and fading. (1.) The power of man, when it does appear against the deliverance, is not to be feared; for it shall be as grass before the word of the Lord, it shall wither and be trodden down: the insulting Babylonians, who promise themselves that the desolations of Jerusalem shall be perpetual, are but as grass which the Spirit of the Lord blows upon, makes nothing of, but blasts all its glory; for the word of the Lord, which promises their deliverance, shall stand for ever, and it is not in the power of their enemies to hinder the execution of it. (2.) The power of man, when it does appear for the deliverance, is not to be trusted; for it is but as grass in comparison with the word of the Lord, which is the only firm foundation for us to build our hope upon.

When God is about to work salvation for his people, he will take them off from depending upon creatures, and looking for it from hills and mountains; they shall fail them, and their expectancies from them shall be frustrated, the Spirit of the Lord shall blow upon them; for God will have no creature to be a rival with him for the hope and confidence of his people; and as it is his word only that shall stand for ever, so in that word only our faith must stand. When we are brought to this, then, and not till then, we are fit for mercy.

2. The word of our God, that glory of the Lord, which is now to be revealed, the gospel, and that grace which is brought with it to us, and wrought by it in us, shall stand for ever; and this is the satisfaction of all believers, when they find all their creature-comforts withering and fading like grass. Thus the apostle applies it to the word which by the gospel is preached, which is able for ever as the incorruptible seed by which we are born again, 1 Pet. i. 25-26. To prepare the way of the Lord we must be convinced, (1.) Of the vanity of the creature; that all flesh is grass, weak and withered; we ourselves are so, and therefore cannot save ourselves; all our friends are so, and therefore are unable to save us. All the beauty of the creature, which might render it amiable, is but the flower of grass, soon blasted, and therefore cannot recommend us to God and to his acceptance.

We are dying creatures, all our comforts in this world are dying comforts, and therefore cannot be the felicity of our immortal souls; we must look further for a salvation, look further for a portion. (2.) Of the validity of the promise of God; we must be convinced that the word of the Lord can do that for us, which all flesh cannot; that forasmuch as it stands for ever, it will furnish us with a happiness that will run parallel with the duration of our souls, which must live for ever; for the things which are not seen, but must be believed, are eternal.

9. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! 10. Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. 11. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

It was promised, (v. 5.) that the glory of the Lord shall be revealed; that is it, with the hopes of which God's people must be comforted. Now here we are told,

1. How it shall be revealed, v. 9. 1. It shall be revealed to Zion and Jerusalem; notice shall be given of it to the remnant that are left in Zion and Jerusalem, the poor of the land, who were vine-dressers and husbandmen; it shall be told them that their brethren shall return to them; this shall be told also to the captives who belonged to Zion and Jerusalem, and retained their affection for them; Zion is said to dwell with the daughter of Babylon,
12. Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? 13. Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him? 14. With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? 15. Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. 16. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. 17. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity.

The scope of these verses is to show what a great and glorious being the Lord Jehovah is, who is Israel's God and Saviour. It comes in here, (1.) To encourage that people, to believe in the Divine declaration to hope in him, and to depend upon him for deliverance, though they were ever so weak, and their oppressors ever so strong. (2.) To engage them to cleave to him, and not to turn aside after other gods; for there are none to be compared with him. (3.) To possess all those who receive the glad tidings of redemption by Christ, with a holy awe and reverence of God. Though it was said, (v. 8.) He hold your God, and (v. 11.) that he shall feed his flock like a shepherd; yet these condescensions of his grace must not be thought of with any diminution.
that is used for the chaos, (Gen. i. 2.) to which they will at last be reduced. Let this beget in us high thoughts of God, and low thoughts of this world, and engage us to make God, and not man, both our Fear and our Hope. This magnifies God's love to the world, that, though it is of such small account and value with him, yet, for the redemption of it, he gave his only-begotten Son, John iii. 16.

4. The services of the church can make no addition to him, nor do they bear any proportion to his infinite perfections; (v. 16.) Lebanon is not sufficient to burn; not the wood of it to be for the fuel of the altar, though it be so well stocked with cedars; nor the beasts of it to be for sacrifices, though it be so well stocked with cattle, v. 16. Whatever we honour God with, it falls infinitely short of the merit of his perfection; for he is exalted far above all blessing and praise all burn-offerings and sacrifices.

18. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? 19. The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. 20. He that is so impoverished, that he hath no oblation, chooseth a tree that will not rot: he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved. 21. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? 22. It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in; 23. That bringeth the princes to nothing: he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. 24. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown; yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. 25. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. 26. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one falleth.

The prophet here reproves those, 1. Who represented God by creatures, and so changed his truth into a lie, and his glory into shame; who made images, and then said that they resembled God, and paid their homage to them accordingly. 2. Who put creatures in the place of God, who feared them more than God, as if they were a match for him, or loved them more than God, as if they were fit to be rivals with him. Twice the challenge is here made. The question is asked, To whom will ye liken me? and again, v. 25. The Holy One himself says, To whom will ye liken me? This shows the folly and absurdity. (1.) Of corporal idolatry, making visible images of him who is invisible, imagining the image to be animated by the Deity, and the Deity to be presented by...
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Will ye not know? Will ye not hear? For, those that are ignorant of this are willingly ignorant: the light shines in their faces, but they shut their eyes against it.

Now that which is here said of God, is.

(1.) That he has the command of all the creatures; the heaven and the earth themselves are under his management; he sits upon the circle, or globe of the earth, v. 22. He that has the special residence of his glory in the upper world, maintains a dominion over this lower world, gives law to it, and directs all the motions of it to his own glory: he sits under his throne upon the earth, and establishes it. He is still stretching out the heavens, his hand and providence keep them still stretched out, and will do so till the day comes that they shall be rolled together like a scroll. He spreads them out as easily as we draw a curtain to and fro, opening the curtains in the morning, and drawing them close again at night. And the heaven is to this earth as a tent to dwell in; it is a canopy drawn over our heads. Et quod tegit omnia calum—It encircles all. Ovid. Ps. civ. 2.

(2.) That the children of men, even the greatest and mightiest, are as nothing before him. The numerous inhabitants of this earth are, in his eye, as grasshoppers in ours, so little and inconsiderable, of such small value, and of such little use, and so many creatures are set one against another (as they are in themselves) but like the grasshopper’s leap, in an instant they must down to the earth again. If the spic think themselves grasshoppers before the sons of Anak, (Num. xiii. 38.) what are we before the great God? Grasshoppers live but awhile, and live carelessly, not like the ant; so do the most of men.

(3.) That those who appear and act against him, his formidable server; they may be to their fellow-creatures, will certainly be humbled and brought down by the mighty hand of God, v. 23, 24. Princes and judges, who have great authority, and abuse it to the support of oppression and injustice, make nothing of these about them; as for all their enemies, they puff at them; (Ps. x. 5.—xii. 5.) but when the great God takes them to task, he brings them to nothing; he humbles them, and tames them, and makes them as vanity; little regarded, neither feared nor loved. He makes them utterly unable to stand before his judgments; which shall either, (1.) Prevent their settlement in their authority; They shall not be planted, they shall not be sown; and those are the two ways of propagating plants, either by seed or slips. Nay, if they should gain a little in the world, and so be planted or sown, yet their seed shall not take root in the earth, they shall not continue long in power. Eliphaz saw the foolish taking root, but suddenly cursed their habitation. And then how soon is the fig-tree withered away! Or, (2.) He will blast them when they think they are settled; he does but blow upon them, and then they shall neither, and come to nothing, and the whirlwind shall carry them away, Job xl. 4. For God’s wrath, though it seem, at first, to blow slightly upon them, will soon become a mighty whirlwind; when God judges, he will overcome. Those that will not bow before him cannot stand before him.

2. He appeals to what their eyes saw of him; (v. 26.) "Lift up your eyes on high; be not always pining on this earth," (O cursure in terra anima et in corpore, et dividat mundum, et dehend toward so toward the earth, having nothing celestial in them!) "but sometimes look up," (Os hominis ut simile dedit, celatumque tibi sublimat—Heaven gave to man an erect countenance, and bade him gaze on the stars,) "behold the glorious lights of heaven, consider who has created them. They neither made nor marshalled themselves, doubtless therefore, there is a God that gave them their being, power
and motion."  What we see of the creature should lead us to the Creator. The idlers, when they lifted up their eyes, and beheld the hosts of heaven, being wholly immersed in sense, looked no further, but worshipped them, Job. viii. 31. Job. xxxv. 26. Therefore the prophet here directs us to make use of our reason as well as our senses, and to consider who created them, and to pay our homage to him. Give him the glory of his sovereignty over them; he brings out their host by number, as a general draws out the squadrons and battalions of his army; of the knowledge he has of them, by name, under their names, according as their place and influence are; (Ps. cxlvii. 4.) and of the use he makes of them; when he calls them out to any service, so obsequious are they, that, by the greatness of his might, not one of them fails, but, as when the stars in their courses fight against Sisera, every one does that to which he is appointed. To make these creatures therefore rivals with (God), which are such ready servants to him, is an injury to them, as well as an affront to him.

27. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? 28. Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of his understanding. 29. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. 30. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 31. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.

Here, 1. The prophet reproves the people of God, who are now supposed to be captives in Babylon, for their unbelief and distrust of God, and the deceits and despondencies of their spirit under their affliction; (v. 27.) Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord? Why dost thou make hard and manifold conclusions concerning thyself, and the present case, as if the latter were desperate? 1. The titles he here gives them were enough to shame them out of their distrusts; O Jacob, O Israel! Let them remember whence they took these names—from one who had found God faithful to him, and kindled his straits; and why they bore these names—as God's professing people, a people in covenant with him. 2. The way of reproving them is by reasoning with them; "Why? Consider whether thou hast any ground to say so." Many of our foolish frets, and foolish fears, would vanish before a strict inquiry into the causes of them. 3. That which they are reproved for, is, an ill-natured, ill-favoured word they spake of God, as if he had cast them off. There seems to be an emphasis laid upon their saying it; Why sayest thou, and speakest thou? It is bad to have evil thoughts rise in our mind, but it is worse to put an imprimatur to them, and turn them into evil words. David reflects with regret upon what he said in his haste, says he, I did speak in anguish of my heart; and thereupon, on being reproved for it, David says he would not do it again; "My way is hid from the Lord; He takes no notice of our straits, nor concerns himself in any more of our concerns. There are such difficulties in our case, that even divine wisdom and power will be nothwithstanding." A man whose way is hid, is one whom God has hedged in, Job iii. 23. (2.) That God could not help them; "My judgment is passed over from my God; my case is past relief, so far past it, that God himself cannot redress the grievances of it: our bones are dried, Ezek. xxxvi. 11. 11. He reminds them of that which, if duly considered, was sufficient to silence all these fears and distrusts: For in that case, the conviction of idlers, (v. 21.) he appeals to what they had known, and what they had heard. Jacob and Israel were a knowing people, or might have been, and their knowledge came by hearing, for Wisdom cried in their chief places of concourse. Now, among other things, they had heard that God had spoken once, twice, yea many a time they had heard it, That power belongs unto God, Ps. lxxxii. 11. That is, 1. He is himself an almighty God. He must needs be so, for he is the everlasting God, even Jehovah. He was from eternity, he will be to eternity; and therefore with him there is no deficiency, no decay. He has his being of himself, and therefore he is wholly sufficient to himself, and can have no more than his own. He is without beginning of days or end of life, and therefore with him there is no change. He is also the Creator of the ends of the earth, of the whole earth, and all that is in it from end to end. He therefore is the rightful Owner and Ruler of all, and must be concluded to have an absolute power over all, and an all-sufficiency to help his people in their greatest straits. Doubtless, he is still as able to save his church as he was at first to make the world: (1) He has wisdom to contrive the salvation, and that wisdom is never at a loss; There is no searching out of his understanding, so as to countermine the counsels of it, and defeat its intentions; no, nor so as to determine what he will do, for he has ways by himself, ways in the sea. None can say, "Thus far God's wisdom can go, and no further;" for, when we know not what to do, he knows. (2.) He has power to bring about the salvation, and that power is never exhausted; He faints not, nor is weary; he upholds the whole creation, and governs all the creatures, and is neither tired nor toiled; and therefore, no doubt, he has power to relieve his church, even when it is brought over ever so low, without weakness or weariness.

2. He gives strength and power to his people, and helps them, by enabling them to help themselves. He that is the strong God, is the Strength of Israel. (1.) He can help the weak, v. 29. Many a time he gives power to the faint; to them that are ready to faint away, and to them that have no might, he gives only to them increasing strength, as there is more and more occasion for it; Doubtless, weakness are wonderfully recovered, and made strong, by the providence of God: and many that are fickle in spirit, timorous and faint-hearted, unable for services and sufferings, are yet strengthened by the grace of God with all might in the inward man. To them who are sensible of their weakness, and not able to acknowledge they have no might, God does in a special manner increase strength; for, when we are weak in ourselves, then are we strong in the Lord. (2.) He will help the willing; will help those who, in a humble dependence upon him, help themselves, and will do well for those who do their best, v. 50. Those who trust to their own sufficiency, and are so confident of that, that they neither expect themselves to the utmost, nor seek unto God for his grace, are the youths, and the young men, who are
strong, but are apt to think themselves stronger than they are. And they shall faint and be weary, yet they shall utterly fail in their services, in their conflicts, and under their burdens; they shall soon be made to see the folly of trusting to themselves. But they who wait on the Lord, who make conscience of their duty to him, and by faith rely upon him, and commit themselves to his guidance; they who do so, God will not fail them. [1.] They shall have grace sufficient for them: they shall renew their strength as their work is renewed, as there is new occasion; they shall be anointed, and their lamps supplied, with fresh oil; God will be their arm every morning, ch. xxxiii. 2. If they would not be moved, if they would persist in their weakness, they shall recover themselves, and so renew their strength. Heb. They shall change their strength, as their work is changed; doing work, suffering work; they shall have strength to labour, strength to wrestle, strength to resist, strength to bear. As the day, so shall the strength be. [2.] They shall use this grace for the best purposes. Being strengthened, First, They shall soar upward, upward toward God; They shall mount up with wings like eagles; so strongly, so swiftly, high and heavenward. In the strength of divine grace, their souls ascend above the world, and even enter into the holiest. Pious and devout affections are the eagles’ wings, on which gracious souls mount up, Ps. xxv. 1. Secondly, They shall press forward, forward toward heaven, with the assurance that they shall walk in the way of God’s commandments, cheerfully and with alacrity, they shall not be weary; constantly and with perseverance, they shall not faint; and therefore in due season they shall reap. Let Jacob and Israel therefore, in their greatest difficulties, continue waiting upon God, and not despair of timely and effectual relief and succour from him.

CHAP. XLI.

This chapter, as the former, is intended both for the conviction of idolaters, and for the consolation of all God’s faithful worshippers; for the Spirit is sent, and ministers are employed by him, both to convince and to comfort. And however this might be primarily intended for the conviction of Babylonians, and the comfort of Israelites, or for the conviction of those in Israel that were addicted to idolatry, or in whatever situations were, so that kept their integrity, doubtless it was intended both for admonition and encouragement to us; admonition to keep ourselves from idols, and encouragement to them that are in the ways of God. As God renewed his strength, so let them renew their strength, and in opposition to God, and see whether it be not better for them to walk with which they renew that wait upon him; (ch. xl. 31.) let them try their utmost efforts, whether by force of arms, or force of argument. Let them come near; they shall not complain that God’s dread makes them afraid, (Job. xiii. 21.) so that they cannot say what they have to say, in vindication and honour of their idols; no, let them speak freely, let us come near together to judgment. Note, 1. The cause of God and his kingdom is not afraid of a fair trial; if the case be but fairly stated, it will be surely carried in favour of religion. 2. The enemies of God’s church and his holy religion may safely be challenged to say and do their worst for the support of their unholy cause. He that sits in heaven, laughs at them, and the daughter of Zion despises them, for great is the Lord, and with him is strength.

I. KEEP silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: Let them come near, then let them speak; let us come near together to judgment. 2. Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. 3. He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet. 4. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord, the first, and with the last: I am he. 5. The isles saw it, and were afraid; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came. 6. They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage. 7. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth the hammer, him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the sodering; and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved. 8. But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. 9. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

That particular instance of God’s care for his people Israel, in raising up Cyrus to be their deliverer, is here insisted upon as a great proof both of his sovereignty above all idols, and of his power to protect his people. Here is,

A general (as usual) is proclaimed while the cause is in trying; “Keep silence before me, and judge nothing before the time;” while the cause is in trying between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, it becomes all people silently to expect the issue; not to object against God’s proceedings, but to be confident that he will carry the day. The defenders of idolatry are called to say what they can in defence of it. “Let them renew their strength, in opposition to God, and see whether it be not better for them to walk with which they renew that wait upon him; (ch. xl. 31.) let them try their utmost efforts, whether by force of arms, or force of argument. Let them come near; they shall not complain that God’s dread makes them afraid, (Job. xiii. 21.) so that they cannot say what they have to say, in vindication and honour of their idols; no, let them speak freely, let us come near together to judgment. Note, 1. The cause of God and his kingdom is not afraid of a fair trial; if the case be but fairly stated, it will be surely carried in favour of religion. 2. The enemies of God’s church and his holy religion may safely be challenged to say and do their worst for the support of their unholy cause. He that sits in heaven, laughs at them, and the daughter of Zion despises them, for great is the Lord, and with him is strength. II. He particularly challenges the idols to do that for their worshippers, and against his, which he had done, and would do, for his worshippers, and against theirs. Different senses are given of v. 2. concerning the righteous man raised up from the east; and since we cannot determine which is the true, we will make use of each as good. That which is to be proved, is, 1. That the Lord is God alone, the first, and with the last, (v. 4.) that he is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable; that he governed the world from the beginning, and will to the end of time. He has reigned of old, and will reign
for ever; the counsels of his kingdom were from eternity. 2. That Israel is his servant, (v. 8.) whom he owns and protects, and employs, and in whom he is, and will be, glorified. As there is a God in heaven, so there is a church on earth, that is his peculiar care. 

Elisha prays (1 Kings xxv. 36.) Let it be known that thart God, and that I am thy servant. Now, to prove this, he shows,

(1.) That it was he who called Abraham, the father of this despised nation, out of an idolatrous country, and by many instances of his favour made his name great, Gen. xii. 2. He is the righteous man whom God raised up from among the Gentiles, of whom Paul expressly understands it, who brought Abraham publicly from the east? To maintain the honour of the people of Israel, it was very proper to show what a figure this great ancestor of theirs made in his day; and v. 8. seems to be the explication of it, where God calls Israel the seed of Abraham my friend; and v. 4. he calls the generations, namely, the generations of Israel, from the beginning. Also, to put contempt upon idolatry, and particularly the Chaldean idolatry, it was proper to show how Abraham was called from serving other gods; (Josh. xxiv. 2, 3, &c.) so that an early testimony was borne against that idolatry which boasted so much of its antiquity. Also, to encourage the captives in Babylon to hope that God would find a way for their return to their own land, it was proper made the righteousness of God through him, Rom. iv. 3, 11. Cor. v. 21. He was a great example of righteousness in his day, and taught his household to do judgment and justice, Gen. xviii. 19. [2.] That God raised him up from the east, from Ur first, and afterward from Haran, which lay east from Canaan. God would not let him settle in either of those places, but did by him as the eagle by her young ones. God raised him out of singularity, and made him pious; out of obscurity, and made him famous. [3.] He called him to his foot, to follow him with an implicit faith; for he went out, not knowing whither he went, but whom he followed, Heb. xi. 8. These whom God effectually calls, he calls to his foot; to be subject to him, to attend him, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes; and we must all either come to his foot, or be made his footstool. [4.] He gave nations before him, the nations of Canaan, which he promised to make him master of; and thus far gave him an interest in, that the Hittites acknowledged him a mighty prince among them, Gen. xxviii. 6. He made him rule over those kings whom he conquered for the rescue of his brother Lot, Gen. xiv. 13-17. He made him the prince of kings as driven stubble to his bow, that is, made them an easy prey to his castijied servants, he then pursued them, and passed safely, or in peace, under the divine protection, though it was in a way he was altogether unacquainted with; and so considerable was this victory, that Melchizedek himself appeared to celebrate it. Now who did this but the great Jehovah? Can save the gods of the heathen and doeth not God, who is able to walk in the way of the heathens? who can save himself? who can show forth the protection of these impotent deities, but thou art under my protection: they that make them are like unto them, and so is every one that trusts in them; but thou, O Israel, art the servant of a better Master. Observe what is suggested here for the encouragement of God's people, when they are threatened and in
10. Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. 11. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. 12. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of naught. 13. For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. 14. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. 15. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. 16. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

17. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, and the God of Israel will not forsake them. 18. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. 19. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah-tree, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, and the pine, and the box-tree together; 20. That they may see and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

The scope of these verses is to silence the fears, and encourage the faith of the people of God in their distresses; perhaps it is intended, in its first place, for the support of God’s Israel, in captivity; but all that faithfully serve God, through patience and comfort of the scripture, may have hope. And it is addressed to Israel as a single person, that it might the more easily and readily be accommodated and applied by every Israelite indeed to himself. That is a word of caution, counsel, and comfort, which is so often repeated, Fear thou not, and again, (v. 13) Fear not, and (v. 14) Fear not, thou worm Jacob; fear not the threatenings of the enemy, doubt not the promises of thy God; fear not that thou shalt perish in thine affliction, or that the promise of thy deliverance shall fail.” It is against the mind of God, that his people should be a timorous people.

For the suppressing of fear, he assures them, 1. That they may depend upon his presence with them as their God, and a God all-sufficient for them in the worst of times. Observe with what tenderness God speaks, and how willing he is to let the heirs of promise know the immutability of his counsel, and how desirous to make them easy, as he fears thou not, for I am with thee; not only within call, but present with thee: be not dismayed at the power of those that are against thee, for I am thy God, and engaged for thee. Art thou weak? I will strengthen thee. Art thou destitute of friends? I will help thee in the time of need. Art thou ready to sink, ready to fall? I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness, that right hand which is full of righteousness, in dispersing rewards and punishments,” Ps. lxviii. 10. And again, (v. 13) it is promised, 1. That God will strengthen their hands—will help them; “I will hold thy right hand, go hand in hand with thee;” so sense: he will take us by the hand as our Guide, to lead us in our way, will help us up when we are fallen, or prevent our falls; when we are weak, he will hold us up, waving; he will fix us, trembling, he will encourage us, and set us up by the right hand, Ps. lixxiii. 2. That he will silence their fears, saying unto thee, Fear not. He has said it again and again in his word, and has there provided sovereign antidotes against fear; but he will go further, he will by his Spirit say it to their hearts, and make them to hear it, and so will help them.

If. That though their enemies be now very formidable, the hand of God is such a hand, that the day is coming when God will reckoned with them, and they shall triumph over them. There are those that are incensed against God’s people, that strive with them, (v. 11.) that war against them, (v. 12.) that hate them, that seek their ruin, and are continually picking quarrels with them. But let not God’s people be incensed at them, nor strive with them, nor rend their own flesh, (v. 13.) but wait upon the Lord, and believe 1. That they shall be convinced of the folly, at least, if not of the sin, of striving with God’s people; and, finding it to no purpose, they shall be ashamed and confounded, which might bring them to repentance, but will rather fill them with rage. 2. That they shall be quite ruined and undone; (v. 11.) They shall be as nothing before the justice and power of God. When God comes to deal with his proud enemies, he makes nothing of them; or, they shall be brought to nothing, shall be as if they had
never been. This is repeated; (v. 12.) they shall be as nothing, and as a thing of naught; or, as that which is gone and has failed. They that were formidable shall become despicable; that fancied they could do anything, shall be able to bring nothing to pass; that made a figure in the world, and a mighty noise, shall become mere ciphers, and be buried in silence; they shall perish, not only be nothing, but be miserable. Thou shalt seek them; shalt inquire what is become of them, that they do not appear as usual, but thou shalt not find them, as David, (Ps. xxxvii. 36.) I sought him, but he could not be found.

III. That they themselves should become a terror to those who were now a terror to them, and vipers to them who were now harmless. Observe, 1. How Jacob and Israel are reduced, and brought very low. It is the worm Jacob; so little, so weak, and so defenceless, despised and trampled on by every body, forced to creep even into the earth for safety; and we must not wonder that Jacob is become a worm, when even Jacob's King calls himself a Worm, and no man, Ps. xxiii. 6. God's people are sometimes as worms in the humble thoughts of themselves, and their enemies' haughty thoughts of them; worms, but not vipers, as their enemies are—not of the serpent's seed. God regards Jacob's low estate, and says, 

"Fear not, thou worm Jacob; fear not that thou shalt be crushed; and we men of Israel," (ye few men, so some read it, ye dead men, so others,) 

"do not give up yourselves for gone notwithstanding." Note, The grace of God will silence fears, even then when there seems to be the greatest cause for them; perplexed, but not in despair. 2. How Jacob and Israel are actually from this low estate, and made as formidable as ever they had been despicable. But by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small? We are here told who shall make Jacob great, and empower the honour of God to help the weak. He will help them, for he is their Redeemer, who is wont to redeem them, who has undertaken to do it. Christ is the Redeemer, from him is our help found. He will help them, for he is the Holy One of Israel, worshipped among them in the beauty of holiness, and engaged by promise to them. The Lord will help them, and by his grace enable them to work, and make Jacob a blessing, to the great joy of his enemies, and to make Jacob become a threatening instrument to all their oppressors. Observe, He is but an instrument, a tool in God's hand, that he is pleased to make use of; and he is an instrument of God's making, and is no more than God makes him. But if God make him a threatening instrument, he will make use of him, and therefore will make him fit for use, new and sharp, and having teeth, or sharp spikes; and then, by destruction and strength, thou shalt thrust the mountains, the highest and strongest and most stubborn of thine enemies; thou shalt not only beat them, but beat them small; they shall not be as corn threshed out, which is valuable, and is carefully preserved, (such God's people are when they are under the fold, (ch. xxi. 10.) O my threshing, yet the winepress of the princes is full of blood;) but these are made as chaff, which is good for nothing, and which the husbandman is glad to get rid of. He pursues the metaphor, v. 16. Having thrust them, thou shalt winnow them, and the wind shall scatter them. This perhaps had its accomplishment, in part, in the victories of the Jews over their enemies in the times of the Maccabees; but it seems in general designed to read the final doom of all but implicable enemies of the church of God, and to have its accomplishment likewise in the triumphs of the cross of Christ, the gospel of Christ, and all the faithful followers of Christ, over the powers of darkness, which, first or last, shall all be dissipated, and in Christ all believers shall be more than conquerors, and he that overcometh shall have power over the nations, Rev. ii. 26.

IV. That, heretofore, they shall have abundance of comfort in God, and shall have abundance of honour from them; Thou shalt reign in the Lord, v. 16. When we are freed from that which hindered our joy, and blessed with that which is matter of joy, we ought to remember that God is our exceeding great reward, and in him our strength. When we rejoice over our enemies, we must rejoice in the Lord, for to him alone we owe our liberties and victories. "Thou shalt also glory in the Holy One of Israel, in thine interest in him, and relation to him, and what he has done for thee." And if thus we make God our Praise and Glory, we become to be happy and comfortable in a glorious state.

V. That they shall have substantial and suitable supplies of every thing that is proper for them in the time of need; and if there be occasion, God will again do for them as he did for Israel in their march from Egypt to Canaan, v. 17.—19. When the captives, either in Babylon, or in their return thence, are in distress for want of water or shelter, God will take care of them, and one way or other, make their journey, even through a wilderness, comfortable to them. But, doubtless, this promise has more than such a private interpretation. Their return out of Babylon was typical of our redemption by Christ; and so the contents of these promises, 1. Were provided by the gospel of Christ. That glorious discovery of his love has given full assurance to all those who believe, that God has provided inestimable comforts for them, sufficient for the supply of all their wants, the balancing of all their griefs, and the answering of all their prayers. 2. They are applied by the grace and Spirit of Christ to all believers; that they may have strong consolation in their way, and a complete happiness in their end. Our way to heaven lies through the wilderness of the world: Now, (1.) It is here supposed, that the people of God, in their passage through this world, are often in straits; The poor and needy seek water, and there is none; the poor in spirit hunger and thirst after righteousness. The soul of man, finding itself empty and necessitous, seeks for satisfaction somewhere, but soon desires of finding it in the world, that he may have something in which to feed his soul; and it is thus that God has provided an abundance of help for them, sufficient for the supply of all their wants, the balancing of all their griefs, and the answering of all their prayers. 2. They are applied by the grace and Spirit of Christ to all believers; that they may have strong consolation in their way, and a complete happiness in their end. Our way to heaven lies through the wilderness of the world: Now, (2.) It is here promised, that, one way or other, all their grievances shall be redressed, and they shall be made easy.

[1.] God himself will be nigh unto them in all that which they call upon him for. Let all the praying people of God take notice of this, and take comfort of it; he has said, "I the Lord will hear them, will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them; I will be with them, as I have always been, in their distresses." While we are in the wilderness of this world, this promise is to us the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel, an assurance of God's gracious presence.

[2.] They shall have a constant supply of fresh water, as Israel had in the wilderness, even there, where one would least expect it; (v. 18.) I will open rivers in high places; rivers of grace, rivers of pleasure, rivers of living water, which he spoke of in the person of the Spirit (John v. 37, 38.) that Spirit which should pour out upon the Gentiles, who had been as high places, dry and barren, and lifted up in their own conceit above the necessity of that gift. And there shall be fountains in the midst of the valleys, the valleys of Baca, (Ps. lxxxiv. 6.) that are sandy and wearisome; or among the Jews who had been
as fruitful valleys in comparison with the Gentile mountains. The preaching of the gospel to the world turned that wilderness into a pool of water; yielding fruit to the Owner of it, and relief to the travellers through it.

[3.] They shall have a pleasant shade to screen them from the scorching heat of the sun, as Israel, when they pitched at Elim, where they had not only wells of water, but palm-trees; (Exod. xv. 27.) "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar;" (v. 19.) I will turn the wilderness into an orchard or garden, such as used to be planted with these pleasant trees, so that they shall pass through the wilderness with as much ease and delight as a man walks in his grove. These trees shall be to them then what the pillar of cloud was to Israel in the wilderness, a shelter from the heat." Christ and his grace are so to believers, as the shadow of a great rock, ch. xxxiii. 2. When God sets up his church in the Gentile wilderness, there shall be as great a change made by it in men's characters, as if thorns and briers were turned into cedars, and trees, and myrtles; and by this a blessed change is described, ch. Iv. 13.

[4.] They shall see and acknowledge the hand of God, his power and his favour in this, v. 20. God will do these strange and surprising things, on purpose to awaken them to a conviction and consideration of his hand in all; that they may see his wonderful change, and, knowing that it is above the ordinary course and power of nature, may consider that therefore it comes from a superior power; and, comparing notes upon it, may understand together, and concur in the acknowledgment of it, that the hand of the Lord, that mighty hand of his which is stretched out for his people, and stretched out to them, has done this, and that the Holy One of Israel has created it, made it anew, made it out of nothing, made it for the comfort of his people. Note, God does great things for his people, that he may be taken notice of.

21. Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. 22. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things which they be that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. 23. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together.

24. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of naught: and abomination is he that chooseth you. 25. I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name; and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay. 26. Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and before-time, that we may say, He is righteous? yea, there is none that showeth; yea, there is none that declareth; yea, there is none that heareth your words. 27. The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings. 28. For I beheld, and there was no man; even among them, and there was no counsellor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word. 29. Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing: their molten images are wind and confusion.

The Lord, by the prophet, here repeats the challenge to idolaters, to make out the pretensions of their idols; "Produce your cause," (v. 21.) and make your best of it; "bring forth the strongest reason," (v. 22.) what you have, and show it; and they shall be confounded, and worthy your adoration. Note, There needs no more to show the absurdity of sin, than to produce the reasons that are given in defence of it, for they carry with them their own confutation. I. The idols are here challenged to bring proofs of their knowledge and power. Let us see what they can inform us of, and what they can do: understanding and active power are the accomplishments of a man; whoever pretends to be a god, must have these in perfection. And have the idols made it to appear that they have? No; 1. "They can tell us nothing that we did not know before, so ignorant are they. We challenge them to inform us," (1.) "What has been formerly; let them show the former things, and raise them out of the oblivion in which they were buried." (God inspired Moses to write such things as the things of the heathen could never have dictated to any of their enthusiasts;) or, "let the defenders of idols tell us what mighty achievements they can boast of, as performed by their gods in former times. What did they ever do that was worth taking notice of? Let them specify any thing, and it shall be considered, its due weight shall be given it, and it shall be compared with the latter end of the doing of the Lord, it prove to be as great as it pretended to be, they shall have the credit of it." (2.) "We challenge them to tell us what shall happen, to declare to us things to come," (v. 22.) and again, (v. 23.) "show the things that are to come hereafter." Give this evidence of your omniscience, that nothing can be hid from you, and of your sovereignty and dominion; make it to appear that you have the doing of the Lord, that is before the world, and the knowledge of it, and we will acknowledge you to be the Lord; and we will own that you are gods above us, and gods to us, and worthy of our adoration. No creature can foretell things to come, otherwise than by divine information, with any certainty. 2. "They can do nothing that we cannot do ourselves, so impotent are they." He challenges them to do either good or evil, good to their friends or evil to their enemies: "Let them do, if they can, any thing extraordinary, that people will admire and be affected with. Let them either bless or curse with power. Let us see them either inflict such plagues as God brought on Egypt, or bestow such blessings as God bestowed on Israel. Let them do some great thing, and we shall be able to see where it is, and frightened into a veneration of them, as many have been into a veneration of the true God.

That which is charged upon these idols, and let them disprove it if they can, is, that they are of nothing, v. 24. Their claims have no foundation at all, nor is there any ground or reason, in the least, for men's paying them the respect they do; there is nothing in them worthy our regard. They are of nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing; so read it. "The work they do is of naught, and so is the ado that is made about them; there is no pretense or colour for it; it is all a jest, it is all a sham put upon the world; and therefore he that chooses you, and so gives you your deity, and" (as some read it) "that delights in you, is an abomination to God.
and all wise and good men. He that chooses you, chooses his salvation;" so says the prophet. A man can be at liberty to choose his master, but a man is not at liberty to choose his god. He that chooses any other than the true God, chooses an abomination; his choosing it makes it so.

11. God here produces proofs that he is the true God, and none besides. Let him produce his strong reasons.

2. He has an irresistible power. This he will shortly make to appear in the raising up of Cyrus, and making him a type of Christ; (v. 25.) He will raise him up from the north and from the rising of the sun. Cyrus, by his father, was a Mede, by his mother, a Persian; and his army consisted of Medes, whose country lay north, and Persians, whose country lay east, from Babylon. God will raise him up to great power, and he shall come against Babylon, with ends of his own to serve. But, (1.) He shall proclaim God's name; so it may be read. He shall publish the honour of the God of Israel; so he did remarkably, when, in his proclamation for the release of the Jews out of their captivity, he acknowledged that the Lord God of Israel was the Lord God of heaven, and the God: and he might be said to the Lord; for he caused the building of his temple, and, ver. 28, did himself call upon him, and pray to him, Ezra i. 2, 3. (2.) All opposition shall fall before him; he shall come upon the princes of Babylon, and all others that stood in his way, as mortar, and trample upon them, as the potter treads clay, to serve his own purposes with it. Christ, as Man, was raised up from the north, for Nazar, the father of the northern parts of Persia; as the Angel of the covenant, he ascends from the east. He maintained the honour of heaven; (he shall call upon my name;) and brake the powers of hell, came upon the prince of darkness as mortar, and trod him down.

2. He has an infallible foresight. He would not only do this, but he did now, by his prophet, foretell it. Note, the false gods not only could not do it, but they could not foresee it. (1.) He challenges them to produce any of their pretended deities, or their diviners, that had given notice of this, or could, v. 26. "Who has declared from the beginning any thing of this kind, or has told it beforetime? Tell us if there by any that we know of, for we know not any; if there be any, we will say, He is righteously raised up." The heavens and earth are a witness, he is righteously raised up, and he is in the right, in demanding to be worshipped." This agrees with v. 22, 23. (1.) He challenges to himself the sole honour of doing it, and foretelling it; (v. 27.) I am the first (so it may be read) that will say to Zion, Behold, behold them; that will let the people of Israel know their deliverers are at hand; for there were those who understood by books, God's books, the approach of the time, Dan. i. 2. And I am he that will give to Jerusalem one that brings good tidings, these good tidings of their enlargement. This is applicable to the work of redemption, in which the Lord showed himself much more than in the release of the Jews out of Babylon; he was that contrived our salvation, and brought it about, and he has given to us the glad tidings of reconciliation.

Lastly, Judgment is here given upon this trial: 1. None of all the idols had foretold, or could foresee, this work of wonder. Other nations beside the Jews were released out of captivity in Babylon by Cyrus, or, at least, were greatly concerned in the revolution of the monarchy, and the transferring of it to the Persians; and yet none of them had the power given them to foretell the same by any of their gods or prophets; "There is none that shows, (v. 26.) none that declares; none that gives the least intimation of it; there is none of the nations that hears your words, that can pretend to have heard from their gods such words as you, O prophets, have heard from your God, by your prophets," Ps. cxliv. 20. None of all the gods of the nations have showed their worshippers the way of salvation, which God will show by the Messiah. The good tidings which the Lord will send in the gospel, is a mystery hid from ages and generations, Rom. xvi. 25, 26.

2. None of those who pleaded for them could produce any evidence of their knowledge or power, that had in it any colour of proof that they were gods; all their advocates were struck dumb with this challenge, (v. 28.) "I beheld, and there was no man that could give evidence for them, even among them that were their most zealous admirers, and there was no counsellor, there were none that could offer any thing for the support of their case. Even among the false gods, the thunder was the fit to give counsel in the most trivial matters, and yet there were those that asked counsel of them in the most important and difficult affairs. When I asked them what they had to say for themselves, they stood mute; the case was so plain against them, there was none that could answer a word." Judgment must therefore be given against the defendant with a loud voice; Acts xxvi. 21-23. He has nothing to say for himself; he was speechless, Matth. xxi. 12.

3. Sentence is therefore given according to the charge exhibited against them; (v. 24.) "Behold, they are all vanity, (v. 29.) they are a lie and a cheat, they are not in themselves what they pretend to be, nor will their worshippers find that in them which they promise themselves. Their works are nothing, of no force, of no worth; their enemics need no fear no hurt from them, their worshippers can hope for no good from them. Their molten images, and indeed all their images, are wind and confusion, vanity and vexation; those that worship them will be deceived in them, and will reflect upon their own folly with the greatest bitterness. Therefore, dearly beloved, flee from idolatry," 1 Cor. x. 14.

CHAP. XLII.

The prophet seems here to launch out yet further into the prophecy of the Messiah and his kingdom, under the type of Cyrus, as the herald of the good tidings, to which he by him yet more in view, he almost forgets the occasion that led him into it, and drops the return out of Babylon; for indeed the prospect of this would be a greater comfort and support to the believing Jews, in their captivity, than the hope of that. And (as Mr. Gatsker well observes) in this, and similar prophecies of Christ, that are couched in types, as of David and Solomon, some passages to them the reader is to regard as applying to others to the truth and not to the type, and many to the type in one sense, and the truth in another. Here is, 1. A prophecy of the Messiah's coming with meekness, and yet with power, to do the Redeemer's work, v. 1. 4. 2. His commission opened, which he received from the Father, v. 5., 9. 3. The joy and rejoicing with which the glad tidings of this should be received v. 10., 12. 4. The messenger who goes in the way of the prophet, (v. 10.) to throw the devil's kingdom, v. 13., 17. 5. The rejection and ruin of the Jews for their unbelief, v. 18., 25.

1. BEHOLD my servant, whom I up-
judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

We are sure that these verses are to be understood of Christ, for the evangelist tells us expressly that in him this prophecy was fulfilled, Matth. xii. 17.—21. Behold with an eye of faith; behold, and observe; behold, and admire, my Servant whom I uphold. Let the Old Testament saints behold, and expect him; let the New Testament saints behold, and remember him. Now what must we behold and consider concerning him? (1.) His Father's concern for him, and relation to him; the confidence he put, and the condescension he took, in him. This put a honour upon him, and made him remarkable, above any other circumstance, v. 1. (1.) God owns him as one employed for him; He is my Servant. Though he was a Son, yet, as a Mediator, he took upon him the form of a servant; learned obedience to the will of God, and practised it, and laid out himself to advance the interests of God's kingdom, and so he was God's servant. (2.) As one chosen by him; He is mine elect; he did not thrust himself into the service, but was called of God, and pitched upon as the fittest person for it. Infinite Wisdom made the choice, and then avowed it. (3.) As one he put a confidence in; He is my servant upon whom I lay; so read it. He put a confidence in him, and did not question but a good end would be made of it; he would go through with his undertaking, and, in that confidence, brought many sons to glory. It was a great trust which the Father reposed in the Son, but he knew him to be far negotia—equal to it, both able and faithful. (4.) As one he took care of; He is my servant whom I uphold; so we read it. The Father bore him up, and bore him out, in his undertaking; both were included in his upholding of him, he stood by him, and strengthened him. (5.) As one whom he took an entire complacency in; Mine elect, in whom my soul delights. His delight was in him from eternity, when he was as one brought up with him, Prov. viii. 30. He had a particular satisfaction in his undertaking; he declared himself well pleased in him, (Matt. iii. 17., xvi. 21.) and therefore loved him, because he had done the work for the salvation of his people; Let our souls delight in Christ, rely on him, and rejoice in him; and thus let us be united to him, and then, for his sake, the Father will be well pleased with us.

2. The qualification of him for his office; I have put my Spirit upon him, to enable him to go through his undertaking, ch. ixi. 1. The Spirit did not only come, but rest, upon him, (ch. xi. 2.) not by measure, as on others of God's servants, but without measure. These whom God employs as his servants, as he will uphold them, and be well pleased with them, so he will put his Spirit upon them.

3. The work to which he is appointed; it is to bring forth judgment to the Gentiles, that is, in infinite wisdom, holiness, and equity, to set up a religious government, under the presidency of which the Gentiles should come, and the blessings of which they should enjoy. The judgments of the Lord, which had been hid from the Gentiles, (Ps. cxlii. 20.) he came to bring forth to the Gentiles, for he was to be a Light to lighten them.

4. The mildness and tenderness with which he should pursue this undertaking, v. 2, 3. He shall carry away, and not break the reed, nor destroy the bruised reed; He shall not strike, nor cry. It shall not be proclaimed, Lo, here is Christ; or, Lo, he is there; as when great princes ride in progress, or make a public entry. He shall have no trumpet sounded before him, nor any noisy retinue to follow him. The opposition he meets with, he shall not strive against, but patiently endure the contradiction of sinners against himself; his kingdom is spiritual, and therefore its weapons are not carnal, nor its appearance pompous; it comes not with observation. (2.) He shall deal wisely and without rigor; These that are wicked he will be patient with; when he has begun to crush them, so that they are as bruised reeds, he will give them space to repent, and not immediately break them; though they are very offensive, as smoking flax, (ch. lxv. 5.) yet he will bear with them, as he did with Jerusalem. Those that are weak he will be tender of; those that have but a little life, a little strength, and without many prospects, with doubts and fears, as a bruised reed, that are as smoking flax, as the stick of a candle newly lighted, which is ready to go out again, he will not despise them, will not plead against them with his great power, nor lay upon them more work, or more suffering, than they can bear, which would break and quench them, but will graciously consider their frame. More is implied than is expressed; he will not break the bruised reed, but will strengthen it, that it may become as a cedar in the courts of our God. He will not quench the smoking flax, but blow it up into a flame. Ncte, Jesus Christ is very tender toward those that have true grace, though they are but weak in it, and accepts the willingness of the spirit, pondering and passing by the weakness of the flesh.

5. The courage and constancy with which he should perseverance in this undertaking, so as to carry his point at last; v. 4. (1.) He shall not fail, nor be discouraged; though he meets with hard service, and much opposition, and foresees how ungrateful the world will be, yet he goes on with his part of the work, till he is able to say, It is finished; and he enables his apostles and ministers to go on with theirs, that the Gentiles may also be saved, though they also have finished their testimony. And thus he accomplishes what he undertook: (1.) He brings forth judgment unto truth; by a long course of miracles, and his resurrection at last, he shall fully evince the truth of his doctrine, and the divine original and authority of that holy religion which he came to establish. (2.) He sets judgment in the earth; he erects his government in the world, a church for himself among men; reforms the world, and by the power of his gospel and grace fixes such principles in the minds of men, as tend to make them wise and just. (3.) The isles of the Gentiles wait for his law, wait for his gospel; bid it welcome as if it had been a thing they had long waited for. They shall become his disciples, shall sit at his feet, and be ready to receive the law from his mouth. What will thou have us to do?

6. Thus saith God the Lord, that created the heavens, and stretched them out: he that spreadeth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein; 6. I the Lord have created thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; 7. To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house. 8. I am the Lord; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. 9. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they
spring forth I tell you of them. 10. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise: from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. 11. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. 12. Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare his praise in the islands.

Here is,
1. The covenant God made with, and the commission he gave to, the Messiah, v. 5.—7, which are an exposition of v. 1. Behold my servant, whom I uphold. 

1. The royal titles by which the great God here makes himself known, and distinguishes himself from all pretenders, speak very much his glory; (v. 5.) Thus saith God the Lord: and who art thou, Lord? He is the Foundation of all being, and therefore the Foundation of all power. He is the Foundation of the sea. (1.) In the upper world: for he created the heavens, and stretched them out, (ch. xl. 22.) and keeps the vast expanse still upon the stretch. (2.) In the lower world; for he spread forth the earth, and made it a capacious habitation, and that which comes out of it is produced by his power. (3.) In the world of mankind: He gives breath to the people up on it, not only air to breathe in, but the breath of life itself, and organs to breathe with; nay, he gives spirit, the powers and faculties of a rational soul, to them that walk therein. Now this is prefixed to God's covenant with the Messiah, and the commission given him, not only to show that he has authority to make such a covenant, and give such a commission, and had power sufficient to bear him out, but that the design of the work of redemption was to maintain the honour of the Creator, and to reduce man to the allegiance he owes to God as his Maker.

2. The assurances which he gives to the Messiah of his presence with him in all he did pursuant to his undertaking, speak much encouragement to him, v. 6. (1.) God owns that the Messiah did not like the honour of being Mediator to himself, but was called of God; that he had no Usurper, but was fairly brought to it; (Heb. v. 4.) I have called thee in righteousness. God not only did him no wrong in calling him to this hard service, he having voluntarily offered himself to it, but did himself right in providing for his own honour, and performing the word which he had spoken. (2.) He promises to stand by him and strengthen him in it; to hold his hand, not only to his work, but in it; to hold his hand, that it might not shake, that it might not fail, and so to keep him. When an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him in his agonies, and the Father himself was with him, then this promise was fulfilled. Note, Those whom God calls, he will own and help, and will hold their hands.

3. The great intentions of this commission speak abundance of comfort to the children of men: he was given for a Covenant of the people, for a Mediator, or Guarantor, of the covenant of grace, which is all summed up in him. God, in giving us Christ, as with him freely given us all the blessings of the new covenant. Two glorious blessings, Christ, in his gospel, brings with him to the Gentile world, light, and liberty. (1.) He is given for a Light to the Gentiles, not only to reveal to them what they were concerned to know, and which otherwise they could not have known, but to open the blind eyes, that they might know it: by his Spirit in the word he presents the object, by his Spirit in the heart he prepares the organ. When the gospel came, light came, a great light to them that sat in darkness, Matt. iv. 16. John iii. 19. And St. Paul was sent to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, Acts xxvi. 18. Christ is the Light of the world. (2.) He is sent to proclaim liberty to the captives, as Cyrus did, to bring out the prisoners; not only to open the prison doors, and give them leave to go out, but that Cyrus should do to bring them out, to induce and enable them to make use of their liberty, which none did but those whose spirits God stirred up. This Christ does by his grace.

II. The ratification and confirmation of this grant that we may be assured of the validity of it, consider.

1. The authority of him that makes the promise, (v. 8.) I am the Lord, Jehovah, that is my name; and that was the name by which he made himself known when he began to perform the promise made to the patriarchs; whereas, before, he manifested himself by the name of God Almighty, Exod. vii. 3. If he is the Lord that gives being and birth to all things, he will give being and birth to this promise. If his name is Jehovah, he will not give his glory to another, whoever it is that stands in competition with him, especially not to graven images. Therefore he will send the Messiah to open men's eyes, that so he may turn them from the service of dumb idols to serve the living God, because, though he has long winked at the times of ignorance, he will now maintain his proprietary, and will not give his glory to graven images. Therefore he will perform his word, because he will not lose the honour of being true to it, nor be ever charged with falsehood by the worshippers of false gods. Therefore he will deliver his people from under the power of idolaters, because it looks as if he had given his praise to graven images, when he gives up his own worshippers to be worshippers of images.

2. The accomplishment of the promises he had formerly made concerning his church, which are proofs of the truth of his word, and the kindness he bears to his people; (v. 9.) Behold, the former things are come to pass; hitherto the Lord has helped his people. He has hitherto removed their burthens, relieved her in former straits. And this, in performance of the promises made to the fathers; there has not failed one word, 1 Kings viii. 36. And now new things do I declare; now I will make new promises, which shall as certainly be fulfilled in their season as old ones were; now I will bestow new favours, such as have not been conferred formerly. Old Testament blessings you have had abundantly, now I declare New Testament blessings; not a fruitful country, and dominion over your neighbours, but spiritual blessings in heavenly things. Before they spring forth in the preaching of the gospel, I tell you of them, under the type and figure of the former things. Note, The receipt of former mercies may encourage us to hope for further mercies for God wills to work for his people, and his compassions are still new.

III. The song of joy and praise which should be sung hereupon, to the glory of God; (v. 10.) Sing unto the Lord a new song, a New Testament song. The giving of Christ for a Light to the Gentiles, (v. 6.) was a new thing, and very surprising; the apostle speaks of it as a mystery, which, in other ages, was not made known, as it is now revealed, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, Eph. iii. 5, 6. Now this being the new thing which God de
The newness of the song which is to be sung on this occasion is this; that whereas, before, the songs of the Lord were very much confined to the temple at Jerusalem, (David's psalms were in the language of the Jews only, and sung by them, and in their own country only; for when they were in a strange land, they had not their regular psalms,) the Gentile nations shall share equally with the Jews in New Testament blessings, and therefore shall join in New Testament praises and acts of worship. There shall be churches set up in Gentile nations, and they shall sing a new song. The conversion of the Gentiles is often foretold under this notion, as appears, Rom. xvi. 9.—11.

It is here promised that the praises of God's grace shall be sung with joy and thankfulness: 1. By those that live in the end of the earth, in countries that lie most remote from Jerusalem; From the uttermost parts of the earth have we heard songs, ch. xxiv. 16. This was fulfilled when Christianity was spread abroad new testimony was brought home, and those that go down to the sea, that do business in great waters, and suck the riches of the sea, and so make themselves masters of the fulness thereof, and all that is therein, with which they shall praise God, and justly, for it is his, Ps. xxiv. 1.—xxv. 5. The Jews traded little at sea; if therefore God's praises be sung by them that go down to the sea, then it must be because the Gentiles have called upon to praise God, Ps. civ. 23. 3. By the islands and the inhabitants thereof, (v. 10.) and again, v. 12. Let them declare his praise in the islands, the isles of the Gentiles; probably referring to the islands of Greece. 4. By the wilderness and the cities thereof, and the villages of Kedar. These lay east from Jerusalem, as the islands lay west, so that the gospel-songs should be sung from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. The whole Gentile world had been like an island, cut off from communication with God's church, and like a wilderness uncultivated, and bringing forth no fruit to God; but now the islands and the wilderness shall praise God. 5. By the inhabitants of the rock, and those that dwell on the tops of the mountains, not only the Gentiles, but the poorest and meanest, and most despisable; they that dwell in cottages, as well as those that inhabit cities and villages. The rude and most barbarous, as the mountaineers commonly are, shall be civilized by the gospel. Or, by the inhabitants of the rock may be meant the inhabitants of that part of Arabia which is called Petraea—the rocky. Perhaps the neighbouring countries shared in the joy of the Israelites when they returned out of Babylon, and some of them came and joined with them in their praises. But we find not that it was to any such degree as might fully answer this illustrious prophecy, and must conclude that it reaches further, and was fulfilled in that which many other prophecies of the joy of the nations are said in the New Testament to be fulfilled in, the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ: when they are brought into the church, they are brought to give glory to the Lord; then they are to him for a praise and a name, and they make it their business to praise him. He is glorified in them, and by them.

13. The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. 14. I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a

travelling woman; I will destroy and devour at once. 15. I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs, and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools. 16. And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them. 17. They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye are our gods.

It comes all to one, whether we make these verses (as some do) the song itself that is to be sung by the Gentile world, or a prophecy of what God will do to make way for the singing of that song, that evangelical song.

1. He will appear in his power and glory more than ever; so he did in the preaching of his gospel, in the divine power and energy which went along with it, and in the wonderful success it had in the falling down of Satan's strong holds, v. 13, 14. He had long held his peace, and been still, and refrained himself; while he winked at the lists of the Gentiles, and the power of Christianity; he suffered them to have the upper hand of the world, and to carry away all nations to walk in their own ways; (Acts xiv. 16.) but now he shall go forth as a mighty man, as a man of war, to attack the devil's kingdom, and give it a fatal blow. The going forth of the gospel is thus represented, Rev. vii. 2. Christ, in it, went forth conquering and to conquer. The ministry of the apostles is called their warfare; and they were the soldiers of Jesus Christ. He shall stir up jealousy, shall appear more jealous than ever for the glory of his own name, and against idolatry. (1.) He shall cry, in the preaching of his word, cry like a travelling woman; for the ministers of Christ preached as men in earnest, and that travelled in birth again till they saw Christ formed in the souls of the people, Gal. iv. 19. He shall cry, roar, in the gospel-woes, which are more terrible than the roaring of a lion, and which must be preached along with gospel-blessings to awaken a sleeping world. (2.) He shall conquer by the power of his Spirit; He shall prevail against his enemies, shall prevail to make them friends, Col. i. 21. Those that contradict and blaspheme his gospel, he shall prevail to put them to silence and shame. He will destroy and devour at once all the oppositions of the powers of the command of Cyrus, he will make waste mountains and hills, level the country, and dry up all their herbs; the army, as usual, shall either carry off the forage or destroy it, and by laying bridges of boats over rivers shall turn them into islands, and so drain the fens and low grounds, to make way for the march of their army, that the path shall be a dry sea-bed. Thus, when the gospel shall be preached, it shall have a free course, and that which hinders the progress of it shall be taken out of the way.

2. He will manifest his favour and grace toward those whose spirits he had stirred up to follow him,
as Ezra i. 5. Those who ask the way to Zion he will show the way, and lead in it, v. 16. Those who by nature are blind, and those who, being under convictions of sin and wrath, are quite at a loss, and know not what to do with themselves, God will lead by a way that they knew not, will show them the way to life and happiness by Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, leading them on in that way, which before they were strangers to. Thus, in the conversion of Paul, he was struck blind first, and then God revealed his Son in him, and made the scales to fall from his eyes. They are weak in knowledge, and the truths of God at first seem unintelligible; but God will make darkness light before them, and knowledge shall be easy to them. They are weak in doing, the commandments of God seem to be inscrutable, and insuperable difficulties are in the way of their obedience; but God will make crooked things straight, their way shall be plain, and their yoke easy. Those whom God brings into the right way, he will guide in it. As a type of this, he will lead the Jews, when they return out of captivity, in a ready road to their own land again, and nothing shall occur to perplex or confound them on their journey. These are great things, and kind things, very great and very kind; but lest any should say, "They are too great, too kind, to be expected from God by such an undeserving people as that of the Jews, such an underserving world as that of the Gentiles," he adds, These things will I do unto them, take my word for it I will, and I will not forsake them; he that beginneth to show this great mercy will go on to do them good.

3. He will particularly put those to confusion who adhere to idols, notwithstanding the attempts made by the preaching of the gospel to turn them from idols; (v. 17.) They shall be turned back, and greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images. The Babylonians shall, when they see how the Jews, who despise their images, are owned and delivered by the God they worship without images; and the Gentiles, when they see how idolatry falls before the preaching of the gospel, is scattered like darkness before the light of the sun, and melts like snow before its heat, they shall be ashamed that ever they said to these molten images, Ye are our gods; for how can they help their worshippers, when they themselves, nor save themselves from falling into contempt? In times of reformation, when many turn from iniquity, and sin, being generally deserted, becomes dissatisfying, it may be hoped that those who will not otherwise be reclaimed, will be wrought upon by that consideration to be ashamed of it.

18. Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see. 19. Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant? 20. Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but heareth not. 21. The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable. 22. But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them smacked in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore. 23. Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken, and hear for the time to come? 24. Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned, for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. 25. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.

The prophet having spoken by way of comfort and encouragement to the believing Jews who waited for the consolation of Israel, here turns to himself and his companions: they have been led from the errors of sin and the ways of the Gentiles, for their conviction and humiliation. Among those who were captivated in Babylon, there were some who were as the evil figs in Jeremiah's vision, who were sent thither for their hurt, to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, for a reproach and a proverb, Jer. xxiv. 9. In them there was a type of the Jews who rejected Christ, and were rejected by him; and this fell more than a figure upon them, when those who believed were inheriting the blessing; for they were broken and ruined, and remain dispersed unto this day.

I. The call that is given to this people: (v. 18.) "Hear, ye deaf, and attend to the joyful sound, and look, ye blind, that ye may see the joyful light." There is a shadow in this, as if there is an unbecoming the wisdom and goodness of God to call us to do that good which yet of ourselves we are not sufficient for; for those have natural powers, which they may employ so as to do better than they do, and may have supernatural grace if it be not their own fault, who yet labour under a moral impotency to that which is good. This call to the Gentiles is, as it were, a discovery of God's grace, and an enlargement of his kingdom.

II. The character that is given of them: (v. 19, 20.) Who is blind but my servant, or deaf, as my messenger? The people of the Jews were in profession, God's servants, and their priests and elders his messengers; (Mal. ii. 7.) but they were deaf and blind. The verse before may be understood as spoken to the Gentile idolaters, whom he calls deaf and blind, because they worshipped gods that were so. "But," says he, "no wonder ye are deaf and blind, when my own people see as bad as you, and many of them as much set upon idolatry." He complains of their selfishness, They are blind; and of their stubbornness, They are deaf. They were even worse than the Gentiles themselves. Corruptio optimi est pessima.—What is best, becomes, when corrupted, the worst. Who is so wittily, so scandalously, blind and deaf as my servant and my messenger, as Jacob who is my servant, (ch. xlv.) and as their prophets and teachers who are my messengers? Who is blind as he that, in profession and pretension, is perfect, that should come nearer to perfection than other people, their priests and prophets? The one prophesies falsely, and the other bears rule by their means; and who so blind as they that will not see? they who have the light shining in their faces?

Note, 1. It is a common thing, but a very sad thing, for those that, in profession, are God's servants and messengers, to be themselves blind and deaf in spiritual things; ignorant, erroneous, and very careless.

2. Blindness and deafness in spiritual things
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are worse in those that profess themselves to be God's servants and messengers than in others. It is in them the greater sin and shame, the greater dishonour to God, and to themselves a greater damnation.

The prophet goes on (v. 20.) to describe the blindness and obstinacy of the Jewish nation, just as our Saviour describes it in his time; (Matt. xix. 14.) And God made many things, but they observed not. Multitudes are ruined for want of observing that which they cannot but see; they perish not through ignorance, but mere carelessness. The Jews, in our Saviour's time, saw many proofs of his divine mission, but they did not observe them; they seemed to open their ears to him, but they did not hear, they did not heed, did not understand, or believe thereby, and then it was all one as if they had not heard.

III. The care God will take of the honour of his own name, notwithstanding their blindness and deafness, especially of his word, which he has magnified above all his name. Shall the unbelief and obstinacy of men make the promise of God of no effect? God forbid, Rom. iii. 5. No, though they are blind and deaf, God will be no lesser in his glory. (v. 21.) The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; not well pleased with their sin, but well pleased in the manifestation of his own righteousness, in rejecting them for rejecting the great salvation. He speaks as one well pleased; (ch. i. 24.) Ah, I will raise me of mine adversaries; and (Exod. v. 13.) he will be comforted. The scripture was fulfilled in the casting off the Jews as well as of the Gentiles, and therein the Lord will be well pleased. He will magnify the law, divine revelation in all the parts of it, and will make it honourable. The law is truly honourable, and the things of it are great things; if men will not magnify it by their obedience to it, God will magnify it himself by punishing them for their disobedience. He will magnify the law by accomplishing what is written in it, will magnify its authority, its efficacy, its justice; he will do it at last, when all men shall be judged by the law of liberty, James ii. 12. He is doing it every day. What is it that God is doing in the world, but magnifying the law, and making it honourable.

IV. The calamities God will bring upon the Jewish nation for their wilful blindness and deafness, v. 22. They are called the children of God, but will prove to be impenitent and unformed in Babylon, were sentenced to perpetual captivity. It was for their sins that they were spoiled of all their possessions, not only in their own land, but in the land of their enemies. They were some of them snared in holes, and others hidden in prison-houses; they cannot help themselves, for they are snared; their friends cannot help them, for they are hidden; and their enemies have forsaken them in their prison-houses. They, and all they have, are for a prey and for a spoil; and there is none that delivers either by force or ransom; nor any that dares say to the proud oppressors, Restore. There they lie, and there they are likely to lie. This had its full accomplishment in the final destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans, which God brought upon them for their sins, Jer. xxxix. 10.

V. The counsel given them in order to their relief; for, though their case be sad, it is not despicable. The generality of them are deaf, they would not hearken to the voice of God's word; he will therefore try his rod, and see who among them will give ear to that, v. 23. We must not despise concerning those who have been long reasonless with in vain; some of them may, at length, give ear and hearken; if one method do not take effect, another may, and sinners shall be left inexcusable.

1. We may all of us, if we will, hear the voice of God, and we are called and invited to hear it. 2. It is worth while to inquire who they are, that perceive God speaking to them, and are willing to hear him. 3. Of the many that hear the voice of God, there are very few that hearken to it or heed it, that hear it with attention and application. 4. It is a work of compassion to him, to have an eye to the time to come. We must hear for hereafter, for what may occur betwixt us and the grave; we must especially hear for eternity. We must hear the word with another world in our eye. The counsel is,

(1.) To acknowledge the hand of God in their afflictions, and, whatever were the instruments, to have an eye to his providence. "Who gave Jacob and Israel, that people that used to have such an interest in heaven, and such a dominion on earth, who gave them for a spoil to the robbers, as they are now to the Babylonians and to the Romans? Did not the Lord? You know he did; consider it then, and hear his voice in these judgments." (2.) To acknowledge that they had provoked God; thus to will and to do, and had brought all these calamities upon themselves. [1.] These punishments were first inflicted on them for their disobedience to the laws of God; it is he against whom we have sinned; the prophet puts himself into the number of the sinners, as Dan ix. 7, 8. "We have sinned, we have all brought fuel to the fire; and there are those among us that have wilfully and blindly misled the whole nation, and they had never been given up to the robbers, if they had not by their iniquities sold themselves. Therefore is it, because they have violated the commands of the law, that God has brought upon them the curses of the law; he has not dropped, but poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle, all the desolations of war, which have with us alternately and in succession. [2.] These judgments were continued upon them for their senseless and incorrigible under the rod of God. The Lord will make them for his anger, and he knew it not, was not aware of it, took no notice of the judgments, at least not of the hand of God in them. Nay, it burned him, and though he could not then but know it, and feel it, yet he laid it not to heart, was not awakened by the fiery rebukes he was under, nor at all affected with them. Those who are not humbled by lesser judgments must expect greater; for when God judges, he will overcome.

CHAP. XLIII.

The contents of this chapter are much the same with those of the foregoing chapter, looking at the release of the Jews out of their captivity; but looking through that, and beyond that, to the great work of man's redemption by Jesus Christ, and the grace of the gospel, which, through him, believers partake of. Here are 4. Precious promises made to God's people in their affliction, of his presence with them, for their support under it, and their deliverance out of it, v. 1., 7., 11. I. A challenge to Isaiah to declare his God, and to make known the excellency and omnipotence of God, v. 8., 13. II. Encouragement given to the people of God to hope for their deliverance out of Babylon, from the consideration of what God did for their fathers in stories, in describing them out of Egypt, v. 14., 21. IV. A method taken to prepare the people for their deliverance, by putting them in mind of their sins, by which they had provoked God to send them into captivity, and continue them there, that they might repent, and seek to God for pardoning mercy, v. 22., 28.
1. But now, says the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel. Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. 3. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour. I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. 4. Since thou wast precious in my sight thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. 5. Fear not; for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; 6. I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; 7. Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

This chapter has a plain connexion with the close of the foregoing chapter, but a very surprising one. It was there said that Jacob and Israel were not, yet God would continue his love and care for his people, and the body of that nation should still be reserved for mercy. God's goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious; where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, (Rom. v. 20.) and mercy rejoices against judgment, as having prevailed and carried the day, (Is. i. 13.)

Now the sun, breaking out thus of a sudden from behind a thick and dark cloud, shines the brighter, and with a pleasing surprise. The expressions of God's favour and good will to his people here, are very high, and speak abundance of comfort to all the spiritual seed of upright Jacob and praying Israel; for to us is this gospel preached as well as unto them that were captives in Babylon, Hebr. iv. 2. Here we have,

1. The care and concern for his people, and the interests of his church and kingdom among men. Jacob and Israel, though in a sinful, miserable condition, shall be looked after; for, 1. They are God's workmanship, created by him unto good works, Eph. ii. 10. He has created them and formed them, not only given them a being, but this being, formed them into a people, constituted their government, and incorporated them by the charter of his covenant. The new creature, wherever it is, is of God's forming, and he will not forsake the work of his own hands. 2. They are the people of his purchase; he has redeemed them; out of the land of Egypt he first redeemed them, and out of many another bondage, in his love and in his pity, (ch. lxxiii. 9.) much more will he take care of those who are redeemed with the blood of his Son. 3. They are his peculiar people, whom he has distinguished from others, and set apart for himself; he has called them by name, as those he has a particular intimacy with and concern for, and they have his approbation by him, and that he has a special interest in. 4. He is their God in covenant; (v. 3.) I am the Lord thy God, worshipped by thee, and engaged by promise to thee; the Holy One of Israel, the God of Israel; for the true God is a holy One, and holiness becomes his house. And upon all these accounts he might justly say, Fear not, v. 1. and again, v. 5. Fear not. Those that have God for them, need not fear who or what can be against them.

II. The former instances of this care.

1. God had purchased them dear; I gave Egypt for thy ransom; for Egypt was quite laid waste by one plague after another, all their first-born slain, and all their men of war drowned; and all this to force a way for Israel's deliverance from them. Egypt shall be sacrificed rather than Israel shall be continued in slavery, when the time is come for their release. The Ethiopians had invaded them in Asia's time; but they shall be destroyed rather than Israel shall be disturbed. And if this was reckoned so great a thing, to give Egypt for their ransom, what reason have we to admire God's love to us in giving his own Son to be a Ransom for us? 1 John iv. 10. We shall esteem this all the more, as they and all their treasures, compared with the blood of Christ? 2. He had prized them accordingly, and they were very dear to him; (v. 4.) Since thou hast been precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable. Note. True believers are precious in God's sight, they are his jewels, his peculiar treasure, (Exod. xix. 5.) he loves them, his delight is in them, above all the people of the earth; he is so jealous for his people that what makes God's people truly honourable, and their name great: for men are really what they are in God's eye. When the forces of Sennacherib, that they might be diverted from falling upon Israel, were directed by Providence to fall upon Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba, then God gave these countries for Israel, and showed how precious his people were in his sight. So some understand all the words.

III. The further instances God would yet give them of his care and kindness.

1. He would be present with them in their greatest difficulties and dangers; (v. 2.) "When thou passest through the waters, and the rivers, through the fire and the flame, I will be with thee, and that shall be thy security; when dangers are very imminent and threatening, thou shalt be delivered out of them." Did they, in their journey, pass through deep waters? They should not perish in them: The rivers shall not overflow thee. Should they by their persecutors be cast into a fiery furnace, for their constant adherence to their God? Yet then the flame should not kindle upon them; which was fulfilled in the letter, in the wonderful preservation of the three children in the fiery furnace, Dan. iii. 29. Though they went through fire and water, which would be to them as the valley of the shadow of death; yet, while they had God with them, they need fear no evil, they should be borne up, and brought out into a wealthy place, Ps. lxxvi. 12.

2. He would still, when there was occasion, make all the interest of his children, in every way to give way to the interests of his own children; "I will give thee for thee, great men, mighty men, and men of war, and people, men by wholesale, for thy life. Nations shall be sacrificed to thy welfare." All shall be cut off rather than God's Israel shall, so precious are they in his sight. The affairs of the world shall all be ordered and directed so as to be most for the good of the church, 2 Chron. xvi. 9.
3. Those of them that were scattered and dispersed in other nations, should all be gathered in, and share in the blessings of the public, v. 5-7.

Some of the seed of Israel were dispersed into all countries, east, west, north, and south, or into all parts of the country of Babylon: but those whose spirits God stirred up to go to Jerusalem, should be fetched in from all parts. Their desire of grace should reach those that are most remote, and at the greatest distance from each other; and when the time was come, nothing should prevent their coming together to return in a body; in answer to that prayer, (Ps. cxi. 4.) Gather us from among the heathen, and in performance of that promise, (Deut. xxx. 4.) If any of them be driven to the utmost parts of heaven, they shall be gathered together unto me, says the Lord, who will find pleasure on behalf of the children of the captivity, Neh. i. 9. But who are the seed of Israel, that shall thus carefully gathered in? He tells us, (v. 7.) they are such as God has marked for mercy; for, (1.) They are called by his name; they make profession of religion, and are distinguished from the rest of the world by their covenant-relation to God, and denomination from him. (2.) They are composed for his glory, and the purity of his church; they are created in them, and they are formed according to the will of God, and these shall be gathered in. Note, These only are fit to be called by the name of God, that are created by his grace for his glory; and those whom God has created and called shall be gathered in now to Christ as their Head, and hereafter to heaven as their home. He shall gather in his elect from the four winds. This promise points at the gathering in of the dispersed of the Gentiles, and the strangers scattered by the gospel of Christ, who died to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad; for the promise was to all that were afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call and create. God is with the church, and therefore let her not fear none that belong to her shall be lost.

8. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. 9. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justly judged; or let them hear, and say, It is true. 10. Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God. Note, Those who are called to undertake to speak in God's name, and make use of the name of God, to speak to men, should be such as know the name of God, and are acquainted with what is said in his name; and therefore they should be able to answer for what they have professed to speak in his name, and should not be afraid to stand in the face of those who would find fault with what is spoken in his name; nor should they be ashamed to speak in his name, and be bold in the name of the Lord, and do not fear the face of man.

1. The patrons of idolatry are here called to appear, and say what they have to say in defence of their idols, v. 8, 9. Their gods have eyes, and see not, and ears, and hear not, and they that make them, and trust in them, are like unto them; so David had said, (Ps. cxv. 8.) to which the prophet seems here to refer, when he calls idolaters blind shepherds that have eyes, and deaf people that have ears. They have the shape, capacities, and faculties of men; but they are, in effect, destitute of reason, and can neither discern the ways of God, nor the objects of his worship, as men's own making: "Let all the nations therefore be gathered together, let them help one another, and with a combined force plead the cause of their dunghill gods. And if they have nothing to say in their own justification, let them hear what the God of Israel has to say for their conviction and confutation, v. 10.

11. God's witnesses are subpoenaed, or summoned to appear, and give in evidence for him; (v. 10.) Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God. Note, Those who do themselves acknowledge that he is God, should be ready to testify what they know of him to others, that they also may be brought to the acknowledgment of it; I believed, therefore have I spoken. Particularly, "Since you cannot but know, and believe, and understand, you must be ready to bear record, (1.) That I am he, the only true God, that I am a Being, self-existent, and self-sufficient; I am he whom you are to fear, and worship, even me. (2.) I am he, and I was before the first day of time, before the creation of the light, and, consequently, from eternity, I am he." The idols were but of yesterday, new gods that came newly up, (Deut. xxxiii. 17.) but the God of Israel was from everlasting. (2.) That there was no God formed before me, nor shall be after me. The idols were gods formed, (Diu forti—made gods, or rather, gods of violent imagination) by nature they were none, (Ps. xiv. 1.) But God had a being from eternity, yea, and a religion in this world, before there were either idols or idolaters; truth is more ancient than error, and he will have a being to eternity, and will be worshipped and glorified when idols are finished and abolished, and idolatry shall be no more. True religion will keep its ground, and survive all opposition and persecution; what is the truth, and shall be call'd. (3.) That I, I am the Lord, the great Jehovah, who is, and was, and is to come; and beside me there is no Saviour, v. 11. See what it is that the great God glories in, not so much that he is the only Ruler, as that he is the only Saviour; for he delights to do good, he is the Saviour of all men, 1 Tim. iv. 10. (2.) Let us see what the proofs are, which are produced for the confirmation of this point. It appears, (1.) That the Lord is God, by two proofs. First,
He has an infinite and infallible knowledge, as is evident from the predictions of his word; (v. 12.) "I have declared, and I have showed, that which has without fail come to pass; Nay, I never declared or showed any thing, but it has been accomplished; I showed when there was no strange god among you, when you pretended not to consult any oracles but mine, or to have any prophets but mine." It is said, when they came out of Egypt, that the Lord alone did lead them, and there was no strange god with him. Secondly, He has an infinite and irresistible power, as is evident from the performances of his providence. He pleads not only, I have showed, but, I have saved, not only foretold what none can or will say or do, but accomplished it. He is God, and a great God. (v. 13.) "None can deliver out of my hand those whom I will punish; not only no man can, but none of all the gods of the heathen can protect." It is therefore a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, because there is no getting out of them again. I will work what I have designed, both in mercy and judgment, and who shall either oppose or retard it? (v. 14.) That the gods of the heathen, who are rivals with him, are not only inferior to him, but no gods at all; which is proved (v. 9.) by a challenge, Who among them can declare this that I now declare? Who can foretell things to come? Nay, which of them can show us former things? (ch. xlii. 25.) They cannot so much as inspire an historian, much less a prophet. They are challenged to join issue upon this: Let them bring forth their witnesses, to prove their omniscience and omnipotence. And, First, If they do prove them, they shall be justified, the idols in demanding homage, and the idolaters in paying it. Secondly, If they do not prove them, let them say, It is true; let them own the true God, and re- ceive the truth concerning him, that he is God alone. The cause of God is not afraid to stand a fair trial; but it may reasonably be expected that these who cannot justify themselves in their irreligion, should submit to the power of the truth and true godliness.

14. Thus saith the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. 15. I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. 16. Thus saith the Lord, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters: 17. Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army, and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow. 18. Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. 19. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. 20. The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. 21. This people have I formed for myself: they shall show forth my praise. To so low an ebb were the faith and hope of God's people in Babylon brought, that there needed line upon line to assure them that they should be released out of their captivity; and therefore that they might have strong consolation, the assurances of it are often repeated, and here very express and encouraging.

18. God here takes to himself such titles of his own as were very encouraging to them; he is the Lord their Redeemer; not only that will redeem them, but will take it upon him as his office, and make it his business. If he be their God, he will be all that to them which they need, and therefore, when they are in bondage, he will be their Redeemer; he is the Holy One of Israel; and again, (v. 13.) that Holy One, and therefore will make good every word he has spoken; for he is the Holy One. He is the Creator of Israel, that made them a people out of nothing, (for that is creation,) nay, worse than nothing; and he is their King, that owns them as his people, and presides among them.

2. He assures them he will find out a way to break the power of their oppressors that held them captive, and filled up the measure of their own iniquity by their resolution never to let them go, ch. xiv. 17. God will take care to send a victorious prince and army to Babylon, that shall bring down all their repesters, and lay their honour in the dust, and all their people too, even the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships, (for seamen are apt to be noisy,) or whose cry is to the ships as their refuge when the sea is rough. Babylon is in the midst of her sea; and the sea is the seat of her greatness. She has laid down her glorified chariot, and the horse of her army, and the chariot of her power; but, says the Lord, I will turn the chariot of her glory into the midst of her sea, and her horses will go down into the sea. Babylon will be drowned, and all her people; and she will be covered with the waters of that great river. Note, The destruction of Babylon must make way for the enlargement of God's people. And in the prediction of the fall of the New Testament Babylon, we meet with the cries and lamentations of the sailors, Rev. xviii. 17. And observe, It is for Israel's sake that Babylon is ruined, to make way for their deliverance. He reverses the order of the government, he did for his fathers when he brought them out of the land of Egypt; for so it may be read, (v. 16, 17.) 'Thus saith the Lord, which did make a way in the sea, the Red sea, and did bring forth Pharaoh's chariot and horse, that they might die down together in the bottom of the sea, and never rise, but he extinguish; He that did this, can, if he pleases, make a way for you out of the sea, which will be the rest and glory of his people.'

3. The chariot and horse were drawn out by him who is Lord of all hosts, on purpose that they might fall together; howbeit, they meant not so, Mic. iv. 11, 12.

4. He promises to do yet greater things for them than he had done in the days of old; so that they should not have reason to ask, in a way of complaint, (as Gideon asked, Judges vi. 33.) when he said to the Lord, "Remember that our fathers told us of?" For they should see their repeated, nay, they should see them outdone; (v. 18.) "Remember not the former things, from them to take occasion, as some do, to undervalue the present things, as if the former days were better than these; no, you may, if you will, comparatively forget them, and yet know enough by the events of your own day to convince you that the Lord is God alone; for, behold, the Lord will do a new thing, so far, that he will do so, both for the wonder and the worth of the new, to the things of old." The best exposition of this is, Jer. xvi. 14, 15.—xxiii. 7, 8. It shall no more be said, the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; that is an old thing, the remembrance of which will be in a man-
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5. He promises not only to deliver them out of Babylon, but to conduct them safely and comfortably to their own land; (v. 19, 20.) I will make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert; for, it seems, the way from Babylon to Canaan, as well as from Egypt, lay through a desert land, which while the returning captives passed through, God was with them for them, that the camp should be, both well victualled and under a good conduct. The same power that made a way in the sea, (v. 16.) can make a way in the wilderness, and will force its passage through the greatest difficulties. And he that made dry land in the waters, can produce waters in the driest land, in such abundance, as not only to give drink to his people, his chosen, but to the beasts of the field, and owls, and the storks, and such striches, who are therefore said to honour God for it; it is such a sensible refreshment, and yields them so much satisfaction, that, if they were capable of doing it, they would praise God for it, and shame man, who is made capable of praising his Benefactor, and does not. Now, (1.) This looks back to what God did for Israel, when he led them through the wilderness, and rivers in the desert; the world, which lay like a desert, in ignorance and unfruitfulness, was blessed with divine direction and divine comforts, and, in order to both, with a plentiful effusion of the Spirit. The simple Israelites, that were the heart of the field, running wild, fierce as the dragons, stupid as the owls or ostriches, shall be brought to honour God for the extent of his grace to his chosen among them.

6. He runs up all these promised blessings to their great original, the purposes and designs of his own glory; (v. 21.) This people have I formed for myself, and therefore I do all this for them, that they may show forth my praise. Note, (1.) The church is of God's forming, and so are all the living members of it. The new heavens, the new earth, the new man, are the work of God's hand, and are no more, no better, than he makes them; they are fashioned according to his will. (2.) He forms it for himself; he that is the first Cause, is the highest Father, and therefore I do all this for them, that I may show forth my praise. Note, The Lord has made all the things for himself, his Israel especially, to be him for a people, and for a name, and for a praise; and no otherwise can they be for him, or serviceable to him, than as his grace is glorified in them, Jer. xiii. 11. Ephi. i. 6, 12, 14. (3.) It is therefore our duty to show forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to be the hands of Christ, to feed us, and keep us, and lead us, and all for himself, especially in this instance for his purposes, that his grace must praise him, else we answer not the end of the being and blessings we have.

22. But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. 23. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt-offerings, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices: I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor weared thee with incense. 24. Thou hast bought me no sweet cake with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. 25. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. 26. Put me in remembrance; let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified. 27. Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me. 28. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.

This charge (and a high charge it is, which is here exhibited against Jacob and Israel, God's professing people,) comes in here; 1. To clear God's justice in bringing them into captivity, and to vindicate the means God's mercy was employed in their deliverance from Babylon, and to show that the same mercy was promised for their. 2. To make them remember how they had neglected God and cast him off, and to show that the Lord's love was not such as to be lost upon them, and that no other expectations were from them; he had formed them for himself, intending they should show forth his praise. But they had not done so; they had frustrated God's expectations from them, and made very ill returns to him for his favours. For, (1.) They had cast off prayer; thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; and accursed was the name of Jacob for more than his example, thou hast been weary of me. They
had been in relation to God, employed in his service, and in communion with him; but they began to snuff at it, and to say, Behold, what a weariness is it! Note, Those who neglect to call upon God, do in effect tell him they are weary of him, and have a mind to change their Master. (3.) They grudged the expense of their devotion, and were magnific and penurious in it; they were for a cheap religion; and in those acts of devotion, in that were costly, they desired to be excused: they had not brought, nor sent their small cattle, the lambs and kids, which God required for burnt-offerings, (v. 23.) much less did they bring their greater cattle; pretending they could not spare them, they must have them for the maintenance of their families. So little sense had they of the greatness of God and their obligations to him. They had brought their cattle with a lamb out of their flock for his honour, though he called for it, and would graciously accept it. Sweet cane, or calamus, was used for the holy oil, incense, and perfume; but they were not willing to be at the charge of that; (v. 24.) what they had must serve; though it was old and good for nothing, they would not buy fresh. Perhaps it was usual for devotees to use the best of our common provisions, as well as other free-will offerings; but they were not so generous, nor did they fill the altar of God, nor moisten it abundantly, as they should have done, with the fat of their sacrifices; what sacrifices they did bring were of the lean and refuse of their cattle, that had no fat in them to regale the altar with, (4.) and they did not even honour God with them, and so they were, in effect, as no sacrifices; (v. 23.) Neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. Some of them offered their sacrifices to false gods; others, who offered them to the true God, were either careless in the manner of it, or hypocritical in their intentions; so that they might be truly said not to honour God with them, but rather to dishonour him. And that which aggravated their neglect of sacrifice, was, that, as God had appointed it, it was no burdensome thing; it was not a service that they had any reason at all to complain of; “I have not caused thee to serve with an offering; I have not made it a task and drudgery to you, whatever you, through the corruption of your natures, have made it. But you have brought not sacrifices, but sacrifices of contempt.” None of God’s commandments are grievous, no, not those concerning sacrifice and incense. They were not more costly than might be afforded by them that lived in such a plentiful country; nor did their attendance on them require any more time than they could well spare. But that which especially forbade them to call it a wearisome service, was, that they were required to be cheerful and pleasant, and to rejoice before God in all their approaches to him, Deut. xii. 12. They had many feasts and good days; but only one day in all the year in which they were to afflict their souls. The ordinances of the ceremonial law, though, in comparison with Christ’s easy yoke, they are spoken of as heavy, (Acts xxv. 10.) yet, in comparison with the service that idolaters did to their false gods, they were light, and not to be called services, or found fault with as wearisome. God did not require them to sacrifice their children, as Moloch did.

2. Commissions of the evil which God had forbidden; and omissions commonly make way for commissions; Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins. When we make God’s gifts the food and fuel of our lusts, and his providence the portion of our wicked projects, especially when we encourage ourselves to continue in sin, because grace has abounded, then we make God to serve with our sins; or, it may denote what a grief and burden sin is to God; it not only wearies men and makes the creation groan, but it wearies my God also, (ch. vii. 15.) and makes the Creator complain that he is grieved, (Ps. xcv. 10.) that he is broken, (Ezek. vi. 9.) that he is pressed with sinners as a cart is pressed that is full of straw, (Amos ii. 13.) and to cry out, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, ch. i. 24. The antithesis is observable; God has not made them to serve with their sacrifices, but they had made him to serve with their sins. The master had not tires the servants with his commands, but they had tired him with their disobedience. Those are wicked servants indeed, that carry it so ill to so good a Master. God is tender of our comfort, but we are careless of his honour. Let this engage us to keep close to our duty, that it is easy and reasonable, and no disparagement to us, nor too hard for us.

11. What were the tokens of God’s displeasure against their sins, v. 27. 1. That they were children of disobedience; for their first father, their forefathers, had sinned; and they had not only sinned in their joints, but sinned like them. Ezra confesses this; Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great transgression, ch. ix. 7. But their forefathers are called their first father, to put us in mind of the apostacy and rebellion of the first Adam, and to make us see how, in whatever respect we may have transgressed, we must trace up the streams of all our transgressions.

2. That they were scholars of disobedience too, for their teachers had transgressed against God; were guilty of gross, scandalous sins, and the people, no doubt, would learn to do as they did. It is ill with a people when their leaders cause them to err, and their teachers, who should reform them, corrupt them.

11. What were the tokens of God’s displeasure against them for their sins, v. 28. He brought ruin both upon church and state; 1. The honour of their church was laid in the dust and trampled on; I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, the priests and Levites who presided with great dignity and power in the temple-service; they profaned themselves, and made themselves vile, by their enormities; and then God profaned them, and made them vile, by their calamities and the contempt they fell into, Mal. ii. 9. 2. The honour of their state was ruined likewise; I have given Jacob to the curse, to be cursed, and hated, and abused, of all their neighbours; and Israel to reproach, to be insulted, ridiculed, and triumphed over, by their enemies. They reproached them perhaps for that in them that was good, they mocked at their sabbaths; (Lam. i. 7.) but God gave them up to reproach, to correct them for what was amiss. Note, The dishonour which men at any time do us, should humble us for the dishonour we have done to God; and therefore we must bear it patiently, because we suffer it justly; and must acknowledge that to us becometh confusion.

IV. What were the riches of God’s mercy toward them notwithstanding; (v. 25.) I. Even I, am he who yet blottest out thy transgressions. This gracious declaration of God’s readiness to pardon sin comes in very strangely: the charge ran very high, Thou hast exercised me with thine iniquities, v. 24. Now one would think it should follow, “I, even I, am he that will destroy thee, and burthen myself no longer with care about thee.” No, I, even I, am he that will forgive thee; as if the great God would teach us, that forgiving injuries is the best way to make ourselves easy, and to keep ourselves from being wearied with them. This comes in here, to encourage them to repent, because there is forgiveness with God, and to show the freeness of divine mercy; where sin has been exceeding sinful, grace appears exceeding gracious. Apply this, I. To the forgiving of the sins of Israel, as a people in their national capacity: when God stopped the course of
thorough judgments, and saved them from utter ruin, even then when he had them under severe re- 

2. Thus saith the Lord that made thee, 

3. And, "Fear not, O Jacob my servant; and thou, Israel, whom I have chosen.

4. I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: And they shall spring up among the grass, as willows by the water-courses.

5. One shall say, 'I am the Lord's;' and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.

6. Thus said the Lord the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God. 7. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them. 8. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.

Two great truths are abundantly made out in these verses:

1. That the people of God are a happy people, especially upon account of the covenant that is between them and God. The people of Israel were so as a figure of the gospel-Israel.

Three things complete their happiness:

1. The covenant-relations wherein they stand to God. 

2. Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob my servant; and thou, Israel, whom I have chosen.

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womb; and therefore he will help them over their difficulties, and help them in their services.

2. The covenant-blessings which he has secured to them and theirs, v. 3. 4. (1.) They that are sensible of their spiritual wants, and the insufficiency of the creature to supply them, shall have abundant satisfaction in God: I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, that thirsts after righteousness: he shall be filled. Water shall be beareth out to the dry grass of the earth, and the covenant-blessings above all the delights of sense. (2.) They that are barren as the dry ground shall be watered with the grace of God, with floods of that grace, and God will himself give the increase. If the ground be ever so dry, God has floods of grace to water it with. (3.) The water God will pour out is, his Spirit. (John vii. 38.) which God, with our own, without measure upon the Seed, that is, Christ, (Gen. iii. 15.) and by measure upon all the seed of the faithful, upon all the praying, wrestling seed of Jacob, Luke xi. 13. This is the great New Testament promise, that God, having sent his Servant Christ, and upheld him, will send his Spirit to uphold us. (4.) This gift of the Holy Ghost is the great blessing God has reserved the plentiful charm to all his people: I will pour out my Spirit on thy seed, and on thy posterity. To all who are thus made to partake of the privileges of adoption, God will give the spirit of adoption. (6.) Hereby there shall be a general prevalence of the Comforter; thus it shall be spread to distant places. Thus it shall be propagated and perpetuated to after-times: they shall spring up, and grow as fast as willows by the water-courses, and in every thing that is virtuous and praiseworthy shall be eminent, and excel all about them, as the willows overtop the grass among which they grow, v. 4. Note, It is a great happiness to the church, and a great pleasure to good men, to see the rising generation hopeful and promising. And it will be so if God pour his Spirit upon them, that blessing, that blessing of blessings.

3. The consent they cheerfully give to their part of the covenant, v. 5. When the Jews returned out of captivity, they renewed their covenant with God, (Jer. i. 5.) particularly that which they had made with the second Hebraic Haggadah. 2, 3, 8. Backsliders must thus repent, and do their first works. Many of those that were without, did at that time join themselves to them, invited by that glorious appearance of God for them, Zechar. viii. 23. Ezech. viii. 17. And they say, We are the Lord's, and call ourselves by the name of Jacob; for there was one law, one covenant, for the stranger and for those that were born in the land. And doubtless it looks further yet, to the conversion of the Gentiles, and the multitudes of them who, upon the effusion of the Spirit, after Christ's ascension, should be joined to the Lord, and added to the church. These converts are one and another, very many, of different ranks and nations, and all welcome to God, Col. iii. 11. When one does it, another shall be by his example, and with him, and then another, and so it shall be until the seal of one may provoke many. (1.) They shall resign themselves to God: not one in the name of the rest, but every one for himself shall say, I am the Lord's; he has an incontestable right to rule me, and I submit to him, to all his commands, to all his dispositions. I am, and will be, his only, his own, his from eternity, and for eternity, not for a part of the way, living and dying I will be his. (2.) They shall incorporate themselves with the people of God, call themselves by the name of Jacob, forgetting their own people and their father's house, and determined to wear the character and livery of God's family. They shall love all God's people, shall associate with them, give them the right hand of fellowship, espouse their cause, seek the good of the church in general, and of all the particular members of it, and be willing to take their lot with them in all conditions. (3.) They shall do this very solemnly: some of them shall subscribe with their hands, the covenant, and contract under a solemn agreement, and so again, a man sets his hand to it, and delivers it as his act and deed. The more express we are in our covenanting with God, the better: Exod. xxiv. 7. Josh. xxxiv. 26, 27. Neh. ix. 38. Fast bind, fast find.

4. That, the God we trust in is a God of incontestable sovereignty and irresistible power. He is the Lord, Jehovah, self-existent and self-sufficient; and he is the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts of heaven and earth, of angels and men.

5. That he stands in relation to man, and has a particular concern for any one concern for any one. He is the King of Israel and his Redeemer; therefore his Redeemer, because his King; and those that take God for their King shall have him for their Redeemer. When God would assert himself God alone, he proclaims himself Israel's God, that his people may be encouraged both to adhere to him and to triumph in him.

6. That he is eternal; the first and the last. He is God from everlasting, before the worlds were, and will be so to everlasting, when the world shall be no more. If there were not a God to create, nothing had ever been; and if there were not a God to uphold, all would soon come to nothing again. He is all in all; is the first Cause, from whom are all things, and the last End, to and for whom are all things; (Nom. xii. 36.) the Alpha and the Omega, Rev. i. 11.

7. That he is God alone; (v. 6.) Beside me there is no God. Is there a God beside me? v. 8. We will appeal to the greatest scholars. Did they ever in all their reading meet with any other? To these that have the largest acquaintance with the world: did they ever meet with any other? There are many (1 Cor. viii. 5.) gods and goddesses, and magick gods; but is there, say, beside our God, that is infinite and eternal; any, beside him, that is the Creator of the world, and the Protector and Benefactor of the whole creation; any, beside him, that can do that for their worshippers which he can and will do for his? Ye are my witnesses. I have been a Nazarch to you. You have tried other gods; you and any of them all-sufficient to can do any of them like me? Yes, there is no god; no rock, so the word is; none besides that can be a rock for a foundation to build on, a rock for shelter to flee to. God is the Rock, and their rock is not as ours. Deut. xxxii. 4, 31. I know not any; as if he had said, "I never met with any that offered to stand in competition with me, or that dared bring their pretensions to my trial; if I did, I knew not of you, nor could I beat you better than I can, I would recommend you to them; but I know not any." There is no God beside Jehovah; he is infinite, and therefore there can be no other; he is all-sufficient, and therefore there needs no other. This is designed for the confirming of the hopes of God's people in the promise of their deliverance out of Babylon, and, in order to that, for the confirming of their idolatry; when the affliction had done its work, it should be removed. They are reminded of the first and great article of their creed, that the Lord their God is one Lord, Deut. vi. 4. And therefore,
(1.) They needed not to hope in any other god; those on whom the sun shines, need neither moon nor stars, nor the light of their own fire. (2.) They needed not to fear any other god; their own God was more able to do them good than all the false and counterfeit gods of their enemies were to do them hurt.

5. That none besides could foretell these things to come, which God now by his prophet gave notice of to the world, above two hundred years before they came to pass; (v. 7.) "Who, as I, shall call, shall gather Cyrus for Babylon, shall call Israel out of Babylon? Is there any that God can call effectually, and has every creature, every heart, at his beck? Who shall declare it, how shall it be, and by whom, as I do?" Nay, God goes further; he not only sees it in order, as having the fore-knowledge of it, but sets it in order, as having the sole management and direction of it. Can any other pretend to this? He has always set things in order according to the counsel of his own will, ever since he appointed the ancient people, the people of Israel, who could give a truer and fuller account of the antiquities of their own nation than any kingdom in the world could. Ever since he appointed that people to be his peculiar people, his providence was particularly conversant about them, and he told them beforehand the events that should concern them—(b) their bondage in Egypt, their deliverance, and their settlement in Canaan. All was set in order in the divine predictions as well as in the divine purposes. Could any other done so? Would any other have been so far concerned for them? He challenges the pretenders to show the things that shall come hereafter: "Let them, if they can, tell us the name of the man that shall destroy Babylon, and deliver Israel? Nay, if they cannot prove that the things that shall come hereafter, let them tell us the things that are coming, that are nigh at hand, and at the door; let them tell us what shall come to pass to-morrow; but they cannot do that; fear them not therefore, nor be afraid of them. What harm can they do you? What hinderance can they give to your deliverance, when I have told thee it shall be accomplished, and I have solemnly declared it?" Note, Those who have the word of God's promise to depend upon, need not to be afraid of any adverse powers or policies whatsoever.

9. They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit: and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. 10. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? 11. Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed; and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together. 12. The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms; yet, he is hungry, and his strength faileth; he drinketh no water, and is faint. 13. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule, he marketh it out with a line, he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. 14. He Heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. 15. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it: he maketh it a graven image, and felleth down thereto. 16. He burneth part thereof in the fire: with part thereof he eateth flesh: he roasteth roast, and is satisfied; yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: 17. And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prays unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. 18. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. 19. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burnt part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof. I have roasted flesh, and eaten it; and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? 20. He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? Often before, God, by the prophet, had mentioned the folly and strange setthiness of idolaters; but here he enlarges upon that head, and very fully and particularly exposes it to contempt and ridicule. The discourse is intended for all the people of Israel against the strong temptation they would be in to worship idols, when they were captives in Babylon, in compliance with the custom of the country, (they being far from the city of their own solemnities,) and to humour those who were now their lords and masters. 2. To cure them of their inclination to idolatry, which was the sin that did most easily beset them, and to reform them from which they were sent into Babylon. As the rod of God is of use to enforce the word, so the word of God is of use to explain the rod, that the voice of both together may be heard and answered. 3. To furnish them with something to say to their Chaldean task-masters. When they insulted over them, when they asked, Where is your God? they might turn to them and say, What are your Gods? 4. To take off their fear of the gods of their enemies, and to encourage their hope in their own God, that he would certainly appear against those who set up such scandalous competitors as these with him for the throne.

Now here, for the conviction of idolaters, we have, 1. A challenge given to them to clear themselves, if they can, from the imputation of the most shamefull folly and senselessness imaginable, v. 9.—11. They set their wits on work to contrive, and their hands on work to frame, graven images, and they call them their delectable things; extremely fond they are of them, and mighty things they expect from them. Note, Through the corruption of men's nature, those things which should be detestable to
them are desirable and delectable; but these are far gone in a distemper, to whom that which is the food and fuel of it is most agreeable. Now, 1. We will tell them that they do so are all vanity, they deceive themselves and one another, and put a great cheat upon those for whom they make these images.

2. We tell them that their delectable things shall not profit them, nor make them any return for the pleasure they take in them; they can neither supply them with good, nor protect them from evil. The good and fuel of it is most agreeable. Now, 1. We will they ever get any thing by the devoirs they pay to them. 3. We appeal to themselves, whether it be not a silly, sottish thing to expect any good from gods of their own making; they are their own vassal women, witnesses against themselves, if they would but give their own consciences leave to deal faithfully with them, that they are blind and ignorant in doing this; they see not nor know, and let them own it, that they may be ashamed. If men would but be true to their own convictions, ordinarily we might be sure of their conversion, particularly idolaters; for who has formed a god? Who but a madman, or one out of his wits, would think of forming a god, of making that which, if he made it a god, must suppose to be his maker? We charge them to think upon their own eyes, with confidence or assurance. If any one has the front to say that he has formed a god, when all his fellows come together to declare what each of them has done toward the making of this god, they will all be ashamed of the cheat they have put upon themselves, and laugh in their sleeves at those whose fine and costly houses, the women formed this god are of, men, weak and impotent, and therefore cannot possibly make a being that shall be omnipotent, nor can they, without blushing, pretend to it; let them all be gathered together, as Demetrius and the craftsmen were, to support their sinking trade, let them stand up to plead their own cause; and make the best they can of it, with hand joined in hand; yet they shall fear to undertake it, when it comes to the setting to, as conscious to themselves of the weakness and badness of their cause; and they shall be ashamed of it, not only when they appear single, but when by appearing together they hope to keep one another in countenance. Note, Idolatry and impurity are things which men may justly both tremble and blush to appear in, which are advantageous to itself, and which becomes the Expositor.

II. A particular narrative of the whole proceeding in making a god; and there needs no more to expose it than to describe it, and tell the story of it.

1. The persons employed about it are handicraft tradesmen, the meanest of them, the very same that you would employ in making the common utensils of your husbandry, a cart or a plough. You must have the hammer, a blacksmith, not with the tongs works in the coals; and it is hard work, for he works with the strength of his arms, till he is hungry, and his strength fails; so eager is he, and so hasty are those who set him at the work, to get it despatched. He cannot allow himself time to eat or drink, for he drinks no water, and therefore is faint, v. 12. Perhaps it was a piece of superstition, a piece of fear, and he takes as much care and pains as if he were going to do a great deed. He takes his box of tools, for he has occasion for them all; he stretches out his rule upon the piece of wood, marks it with a line, where it must be sawed or cut off; he fits it, or polishes it, with planes, the greater first, and then the less; he marks out with the compass what must be the size and shape of it and it is just what he pleases; and, being his own, he has a peculiar fondness for it, and is willing to put all the reputation he can upon it. He makes it according to the beauty of a man, in comely proportion, with the limbs and just dimensions. Let it be at all, altogether unfit to represent the beauty of the Lord God, he put a great honour upon man, when, in respect of the powers and faculties of his soul, he made him after the image of God; but man does a great disfigurement to God, when he makes him, in respect of bodily parts and members, after the image of man. Nor will it at all; stone for the after, nor to complement his god, as to take the fairest of the children of men for his original, whence to take his copy, and to give him all the beauty of a man that he can think of; for all the beauty of the body of a man, when pretended to be put upon him who is an infinite Spirit, is a deformity and diminution to him. And when the goody piece is finished, it must remain in the house, in the temple, in the dwelling-house, if it be one of the lates or festerates—the household gods.

3. The matter of which it is mostly made is sorry stuff to make a god of; it is the stock of a tree.

(1.) The tree itself was fetched out of the forest, where it grew among other trees, of no more virtue or value than its neighbours. It was a cedar, it may be, or a cypress, or a cedron; (v. 14.) perhaps he had an eye upon it some time before for this use, and strengthened it for himself, used some art or other to make it stronger and better grown than other trees were. Or, as some read it, which hath strengthened or lift up itself among the trees of the forest, the tallest and strongest he can pick out. Or, it may be, he pleases his fancy better to take an ash, which is of a quicker growth, and which was of his own planting, for this use, and which has been nourished with rain from heaven. See what a fullacy he puts upon himself, in making that his refuge, which was of his own planting, and which he not only gave the form to, but prepared the matter for. And what an affront he puts upon the God of heaven, in setting up that as a rival with him, which was created for his amusement, and which was the Expositor.

(2.) The roughs of this tree were good for nothing but for fuel; to that use were they put, and so were the chips that were cut off from it in the working of it; they are for a man to burn, v. 15. 16. And to show that that tree has no innate virtue in it for its own protection, it is as capable of being burnt as any other tree; and to show that he who chose it had no more antecedent value for it than for any other tree, he makes no difficulty of throwing part of it into the fire as common rubbish, asking no question for conscience-sake. (1.) It serves him for his parlour-fire; he will take thereof, and warm himself, (v. 15.) and he finds the comfort of it, and is so far from having any regret in his mind for it. I have seen the fire; and certainly that part of the tree which served him for fuel, the use for which God and nature designed it, does him a much greater kindness, and yields him more satisfaction, than ever that will which he makes a god of. (2.) It serves him for his kitchen-fire; he eats flesh with it, that is, he eats the part of the tree, it is not burnt, the Expositor; it is roasted; and is satisfied that he has not done amiss to put it to this use. Nay, (3.) It serves him to beat the oven with, in which we use that fuel which is of least value; he kindles it, and bakes
bread with the heat of it, and none charges him with doing wrong.

(2.) Yet, after all, the stock or body of the tree shall serve to make a god of, when it might as well have served to make a bench, as one of themselves; even a part of their own, upbraids them, Horat. sat. 8. 11. 

Othman true, eunuchs, multitude lignum; Quad. faber, incipient seminum facerer Paphian, Malev. the, i. e. to make eng-. 

In days of yore our godship stood A very worthless log of wood, The poor, doubting or shape us Into a straw, or a Papyrus. At length need'd, for reasons wise, Into a god to fed me ne. Frank. 

And another of them threatens the idol to whom he had committed the custody of his woods, that if he did not preserve them to be fuel for his fire, he should himself be made use of for that purpose: 

Parures pense maine repells, In a divan-domain forces reserve, St. deficient here, et, pace lignum ox. 

Martial. 

Do the plunderers away, and preserve the wood for thy master's hearth, or thou thyself shalt be converted into fuel.

When the besotted idolater has thus served the meanest purposes with part of his tree, and the rest has had time to season, (he makes that a god in his imagination, while that is in the doing, and worship it,) he makes it a graven image, and falls down there to, v. 9. The reason of the grace there is, he makes a god, even his graven image, according to his fancy and intention; he falls down to it, and worship it, gives divine honours to it, prostrates himself before it in the most humble, reverent posture, as a servant, as a supplicant; he prays to it, as having a dependence upon it, and great expectations from it; he saith, Deliver me, for thou art my god. v. 10. He says to his hand and head, when it has justly looks for protection and deliverance. What a strange infatuation is this, to expect help from gods that cannot help themselves! But it is this praying to them that makes them gods, not what the smith or the carpenter did at them. What we place our confidence in for deliverance, that we make a god of. 

Qui fortis servos, ave mel manum, vulbas, Non facit ille deos; qui rogit, ille facit. Martial. 

He who supplies the largeness of worship it be of gold or of marble, makes it a god, and not he who merely constructs it.

III. Here is judgment given upon this whole matter, v. 18. 20. In short, it is the effect and evidence of the greatest stupidity and selfishness, that one could ever imagine rational beings to be guilty of, and shows that man is become worse than the beasts that perish; for they act according to the dictates of sense; but man acts not according to the dictates of reason; (v. 18.) They have not known nor understood anything in sense; men that act rational in other things, in this act most absurdly. Though they have some knowledge and understanding, yet they are strangers to, may they are rebels against, the great law of consideration; (v. 19.) None considers in his heart, nor has so much application of mind as to reason thus with himself, which one would think he might easily do, though there were more underlaid with sense; men that act rationally in other things, in this act most absurdly. Though they have some knowledge and understanding, yet they are strangers to, may they are rebels against, the great law of consideration; (v. 19.) None considers in his heart, nor has so much application of mind as to reason thus with himself, which one would think he might easily do, though there were more underlaid with sense, men that act rationally in other things, in this act most absurdly. Though they have some knowledge and understanding, yet they are strangers to, may they are rebels against, the great law of consideration; (v. 19.) None considers in his heart, nor has so much application of mind as to reason thus with himself, which one would think he might easily do, though there were more underlaid with sense; men that act rationally in other things, in this act most absurdly. They have not known nor understood anything in sense; men that act rational in other things, in this act most absurdly.

"I have burnt part of this tree in the fire, for baking and roasting; and now shall I make the residue thereof an abomination— an idol!" (For that is an abomination to God, and all wise and good men.) "Shall I ungratefully choose to do, or presumptuously dare to do, what the Lord hates? Shall I be such a fool as to fall down to the stock of a tree—a senseless, lifeless, helpless thing? Shall I so far dispone myself and make my self that I bow down to?" A growing tree may be a beautiful, stately thing, but the stock of a tree has lost its glory, and he has lost his that gives glory to it.

Upon the whole, the sad character given of these idolaters, (v. 20.) is, 1. That they put a cheat upon themselves; they feed on ashes; they feed themselves with hopes of advantage by worshipping these idols; but they will be disappointed as much as a man that would expect nourishment by feeding on ashes. Feeding on ashes is an evidence of a depraved appetite, and a distemper of mind; it is a sign that the soul is overpowered by very bad habits, when men, in their worship, go no further than the sight of their eyes will carry them. They are wretchedly deluded, and it is their own fault; a deceived heart of their own, more than the deceiving tongue of others, has turned them aside from the faith and worship of the living God to dumb idols. They are drunk with or themselves, and enticed. The apostles from God is owing entirely to themselves, and to the evil heart of unbelief that is in their own bosom. A revolting and rebellious heart is a deceived heart. 2. That they willfully persist in their self-delusion, and will not be undeceived. There is none of them that can be persuaded so far to suspect himself as to say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? and so to think of delivering his right hand. Note, (3.) That a lie in the right hand; for an idol is a lie, is not what it pretends, performs not what it promises, and it is a teacher of lies, Hab. ii. 18. (2.) It highly concerns those that are secure in an evil way, seriously to consider whether there be not a lie in their right hand. Is not that a lie which with complicity we hold fast as our chief good? Are our hearts set upon the wealth of the world, and the pleasures of sense? They will certainly prove a lie in our right hand. And is not that a lie which with confidence we hold fast by, as the ground on which we build our hopes of heaven? If we trust to our external professions and performances, as if these would save us, we deceive ourselves with a lie in our right hand, with a house built on the sand. (3.) Self- suspicion is the first step toward self-deliverance. We cannot be faithful to ourselves, unless we are jealous of ourselves. He that deliver his soul must begin with the putting of this question to his own conscience, Is there not a lie in my right hand? (4.) Those that are given up to believe a lie, are under the power of strong delusions, which it is hard to get clear of, 2 Thess. ii. 11.

21. Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee ; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. 22. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins; return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. 23. Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel. 24. Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself: 25. That frustrate the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh
his knowledge foolish; 26. That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers, that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof; 27. That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers; 28. That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thine foundation shall be laid.

In these verses we have,

I. The duty which Jacob and Israel, now in captivity, are called to, that they might be qualified and prepared for the deliverance designed them. Our first care must be to get good by our afflictions, and then we may hope to get out of them. The duty is expressed in two words, Remember and Return, as in the counsel to Ephesus, Rev. ii. 4, 5. 1. Remember these, O Jacob; remember what thou art, and what thou hast done; the fullness of idleness and sin is the convictions thou art now under to be ready to thence whenever thou art tempted to that sin. Remember that thou art my servant, and therefore must not serve other masters." 2. Return unto me, v. 22. It is the great concern of those who have backslidden from God, to hasten their return to him; and this is that which he calls them to, when they are in, and when he is returning to them in a way of mercy.

II. The favours which Jacob and Israel, now in captivity, are assured of; and what is here promised to them upon their remembering and returning to God, is in a spiritual sense promised to all that in like manner return to God. It is a very comfortable word, for more is implied in it than is expressed; (v. 21.) "O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me, though for the present thou seem to be so." When we begin to remember God, he will begin to remember us, nay, it is he that remembers us first. Now observe here,

1. The grounds upon which God's favourable intentions to his people were built, and on which they might build their expectations from him. He will deliver them out of captivity, and fit them for their service, and will give them servants, and therefore he has a just quarrel with those that detain them; Let my people go, that they may serve me. The servants of the King of kings are under special protection. (2.) He formed them into a people, formed them from the womb, v. 24. From the first beginning of their increase into a nation, they were under his particular care and government; nay, the very frame of their constitution was of his framing, and his covenant with them was the charter by which they were incorporated. They are his, and he will save them. (3.) He has redeemed them formerly, has many a time redeemed them out of great distress, and he is still the same, in the same relation to them, has the same concern for them. Therefore return unto me, and I will return to you; v. 22. Note, The work of redemption which God has by his Son wrought for us, encoun-

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not lose his purchase. (4.) He has glorified himself in them, (v. 23.) and therefore he will do so still, John xii. 28. It is matter of comfort to us to see God's glory interested in the deliverances of the church; for therefore he will certainly redeem Jacob, because this he will glorify himself. And this assures us that he will perfect the redemption of his saints by Jesus Christ, because there is a day set down when he will be glorified and admired in them all. (5.) He has promised the destruction of the cause of their calamity, and the only obstruction to their deliverance, v. 22. Therefore he will break the yoke of captivity from off their necks, because he has blotted out, as a thick cloud, their transgressions.

Note, [1.] Our transgressions and our sins are a cloud, a thick cloud; they interpose between him and us. The cloud is designed to keep the influence of the Sun of righteousness. It is only through Christ that sin is pardoned. When sin is pardoned, like a cloud that is scattered, it appears no more, it is quite gone; the iniquity of Jacob shall be sought for, and not found, Jer. l. 20. And the comforts that flow into the soul when sin is pardoned, are like clear shining after clouds and rain. (2.) The mercy of God's people should bring along with it; (v. 23.) Sing, O ye heavens. This intimates, (1.) That the whole creation shall have cause for joy and rejoicing in the redemption of God's people; to that it is owing, that it subsists, (that it is rescued from the curse which the sin of man brought upon the ground,) and that it is again put into a capacity of answering the ends of its being, and is assured, that though now it groans, being burdened, it shall at last be delivered from the bondage of corruption. The greatest establishment of the world is the kingdom of God in it, Ps. xcviii. 7, 9. (2.) That the angels shall rejoice in it, and the inhabitants of the upper world. The heavens shall sing, for the Lord has done it. And there is joy in heaven when God and men are reconciled, Luke x. 21. and when Babylon falls, Rev. xxi. 11. (3.) That those who lay at the greatest distance, even the inhabitants of the Gentile world, should join in these praises, as sharing in these joys. The lower parts of the earth, the forest and the trees there, shall bring in the tribute of thanksgiving for the redemption of Israel.

3. The encouragement we have to hope, that, though great difficulties, and such as have been thought insuperable, lie in the way of the church's deliverance, yet, when the time for it is come, they shall all be got over with ease, for thus saith Israel's Redeemer, I am the Lord that maketh all things, did make them at first, and am still making them; for providence is a continued creation; all being, power, life, God and man are conformed, Luke x. 21. and when Babylon falls, Rev. xxi. 11. (2.) That those who lay at the greatest distance, even the inhabitants of the Gentile world, should join in these praises, as sharing in these joys. The lower parts of the earth, the forest and the trees there, shall bring in the tribute of thanksgiving for the redemption of Israel.

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keeps it still upon the stretch himself, by his own power. Let not Israel be discouraged then; nothing is too hard for him to do that made the world, Ps. cxxv. 2, and yet his will, and he can make what use he pleases of all, and has it in his power to serve his own purposes by them.

4. The confusion which this would put upon the oracles of Babylon, by the confusion it would give them, v. 23. God, by delivering his people out of Babylon, would frustrate the tokens of the lars, of all the lying prophets, that said the Babylonian monarchy must unavoidably be destroyed, and prophesied to ground their predictions upon some token, some sign or other, which, according to the rules of their art, foreshadowed its prosperity. How mad will these conjurers grow with vexation, when they see that their skill fails them, and that the contrary happens to that which they so coveted, and were so confident of. Nor would it only baffle their pretended prophecies, but their celebrated politicians too; he turns the wise men backward: finding they cannot go on with their projects, they are forced to quit them; and so he makes the judges fools, and makes their knowledge foolish. Those that are made acquainted with Christ, see all the knowledge they had before to be foolishness in comparison with the knowledge of him. And those that are adversaries to him, will find all their counsels, like Ahithophel's, turned to nothing, and themselves taken in their own craftiness. 1 Cor. iii. 19.

5. The confirmation which this would give to the oracles of God, which the Jews had distrusted, and their enemies despised; God confirms the word of his servant; v. 26. he confirms it by accomplishing it in its season, and performs the counsel of the messengers whom he hath many a time sent to his people to bring them to goodness, he had in store for them. Note. The exact fulfilling of the prophecies of scripture is a confirmation of the truth of the whole book, and an incontestable evidence of its divine original and authority.

6. The particular favors God designed for his people, that were now in captivity, v. 26—28. These were foretold long before they went into captivity, that they might see reason to expect a correction, but no reason to fear a final destruction.

(1.) It is here supposed that Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, shall for a time lie in ruins, dispeopled and uninhabited; but it is promised that they shall be rebuilt and repopulated. When Isaiah lived, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, were full of inhabitants; but they will be emptied, burnt, and destroyed; it was then hard to believe that concerning such strong and populous cities. But the justice of God will do that; and when that is done, it will be hard to believe that ever they will recover themselves again, and yet the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do that too. God has said to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; for, while the worldstands, God will have a church in it; and therefore he will raise up a seed, and cause it to grow in the desolate place, Ps. Ixiv. 56. When God's time is come for the building up of his church, let him alone to find both houses for his people, for they shall not lie exposed, and people for his houses, for they shall not stand empty. The cities of Judah too shall again be built. The Assyrian army under Sennacherib only took the cities of Judah, but the Jews were dispersed; he made the returned undamaged to the right owners; but the Chaldean army demolished them, and by carrying away the inhabitants left them to go to decay of themselves; for if lesser judgments prevail not to humble and reform men, God will send greater; yet these deprivations shall not be perpetual, God will raise up the wastes and decayed places thereof; for he will not contend for ever! The city of strangers, when it is ruined, shall never be built; (ch. xxv. 2) but the city of God's own children is out discontinued, and shall never die. 2

(2.) It is here supposed that the temple too should be destroyed, and lie for a time razed to the foundations; but it is promised that the foundation of it shall again be laid, and no doubt built upon. As the desolation of the sanctuary was to all the pious Jews the most mournful part of the destruction, so the restoration and re-establishment of it would be the most precious part of the deliverance. What joy can they have in the rebuilding of Jerusalem, if the temple there be not rebuilt; for that is it that makes it a holy city, and truly beautiful. This therefore was the chief thing that the Jews had at heart, and had in view, in their return; therefore they would go back to Jerusalem, to build the house of the Lord God of Israel there, Ezr. i. 3.

(3.) It is here supposed that very great difficulties would lie in the way of this deliverance, which it would be impossible for them to wade through; but it is promised that by a divine power they should all be removed; (v. 27.) God saith to the deep, Be dry; so he did when he brought Israel out of Egypt; and so he will again when he brings them out of Babylon, if there be occasion. Who art thou, 0 great deep? saith God; 0 sea, and many seas, shalt thou dry up; 0 thou that art in the middle of the waters, shalt thou become a plain, Zech. iv. 7. Who art thou, 0 great deep? dost thou retard their passage, and think to block it up? Thou shalt be dry, and thy rivers that supply thee shall be dried up. When Cyrus took Babylon by draining the river Euphrates into many channels, and so making it passable for his army, this was fulfilled. Note. Whatever obstacles meet the way of Israel's redemption, God can remove them with a word's speaking.

(4.) It is here supposed that none of the Jews themselves would be able by might and power to force their way out of Babylon; but it is promised that God will raise up a stranger from afar off, that shall fairly open the way for them, and now at length he makes the very men, many scores of years before he was born or thought of; (v. 28.) That saith of Cyrus, he is my shepherd. Israel is his people, and the sheep of his pasture; these sheep are now in the midst of wolves, in the hands of the thief and robber; they are impounded for trespass. Now Cyrus shall be his shepherd, employed by him to release these sheep, and to take care of their return to their own green pastures again. "This he shall perform all my pleasure, shall bring about what is purposed by me, and will be highly pleasing to me." Note, [1.] The most contingent things are certain to the divine prescience; he knew who was the person, and what was his name, that should be the deliverer of his people, and, when he pleased, he could let his church know it, that, when they came to the land which the Lord their God had given them, and when they stepped on that beautiful hill of the world, they might lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption drew nigh. [2.] It is the greatest honour of the greatest men to be employed for God as instruments of his favour to his people. It was more the praise of Cyrus to be God's shepherd, than to be emperor of Persia. [3.] God makes what he pleases of men, of strangers, of heathen; and makes those very men, that were before in the greatest freedom; and, when they think to do as they please, he can overrule them, and make them do as he pleases. Nay, in those very things wherein they are serving themselves, and look no further than that, God is serving his own purposes by them, and making them to perform all his pleasure. Rich princes shall do what poor prophets have f. retold.
CHAP. XLV.

Cyrus was nominated, in the foregoing chapter, to be God's shepherd: more is said to him, and more of him, in this; because he was to be most material in the release of the Jews out of their captivity, but because he was to be therein a type of the great Redeemer, and that release was to be typical of the great redemption from sin and death; for that was the work of which all the prophets witnessed. We have here, 1. The great things which God would do for Cyrus, that he might be put into a capacity to discharge God's people; v. 1. 5. His prophet God would hereby give of his eternal power and godhead, and his universal, incontestable, sovereignty, v. 5.-7. 11. A prayer for the hastening of this deliverance, v. 8.-11. 14. A check to the unbelieving Jews, who quarreled with God for the visions he had given of the nations; v. 9, 10. V. Encouragement given to the believing Jews, who trusted in God, and continued instant in prayer, assuring them that God would in due time accomplish this work by the hand of Cyrus, v. 11.-16. VI. A challenge given to the worshippers of idols, and their doom read, and satisfaction given to the worshippers of the true God, and their comfort secured, with an eye to the Mediator, who is made of God to us both Righteousness and Sanctification, v. 16.-25. And here, as in other parts of this prophecy, there is much of Christ, and gospel-grace.

1. Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut: 2. I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: 3. And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I the Lord which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.

4. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

Cyrus was a Mede, descended (as some say) from Astyages king of Media; the pagan writers are not agreed in their accounts of his original; some tell us that in his infancy he was an outcast, left exposed, and was saved only by being kept by the shepherd. However, it is agreed, that, being a man of an active genius, he soon made himself very considerable; especially, when Cyrus king of Lydia made a descent upon his country, which he not only repulsed, but revenged, prosecuting the advantages he had gained against Cyrus with such vigour, that in a little time he took Sardis, and made himself master of the rich kingdom of Lydia, and the beautiful plain called Sardis with it. This made Cyrus very great, (for Cyrus was rich to a proverb,) and enabled him to pursue his victories in many countries; but it was near ten years after that, in conjunction with his uncle Darius, and with the forces of Persia, that he made this famous attack upon Babylon, which is here foretold, and which we have thus distinctly and fully described. But it is evident, that Cyrus was very rich and strong; it was forty-five miles in compass, some say more; the walls thirty-two feet thick, and a hundred cubits high; some say, they were so thick, that six chariots might drive abreast upon them; some say, they were fifty cubits thick, and two hundred high. Cyrus seems to have had a great ambition to make himself master of this place, and to have projected it long; and at last he performed it.

Now here, 110 years before it came to pass, we are told,

1. What great things God would do for him, that he might put it into his power to release his people; in order to this, he shall be a mighty conqueror, and a wealthy monarch, and nations shall become tributaries to him, and help him both with men and money. Now that which God here promised to do for Cyrus, he could have done for Zerubbabel, or some of the Jews themselves; but the wealth and power of this present age did not argue a trust his own people with much of; so many are the snares and temptations that attend it; but if there has been occasion, for the good of the church, to make use of it, God has been pleased rather to put it into the hands of others, to be employed for them, than to venture it in their own hands.

Cyrus is here called God's anointed, because he was both designed, and chosen by that great secret, by the counsel of God, and was to be herein a type of the Messiah. God engages to hold his right hand, not only to strengthen and sustain him, but to direct his motions and intentions, as Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands, when he was to shoot his arrow against Syria, 2 Kings xi. 16. Being under such direction,

1. He shall extend his conquests very far, and shall make not of the opposition that will be given him. Babylon is too strong a place for a young hero to begin with, and, therefore, that he may be able to deal with that, great additions shall be made to his strength by other conquests. (1.) Popular kingdoms shall yield to him; God will subdue nations before him; when he is in the full career of his successes, he shall make nothing of a nation's being born to him at once; yet it is not that he subdues them, it is God that subdues them for him; the battle is his, and therefore his is the victory. (2.) Potent kings shall fall before him; I will loose the loins of kings; either the girdle of their loins, divest them of their power and dignity, or the strength of their loins, and then it was literally fulfilled in Belshazzar, for when he was terrified by the handwriting on the wall, the joints of his loins were loosed, Dan. vi. 2. (3.) Great cities shall surrender themselves into his hands, without giving him or themselves any trouble. God will incline the keepers of the city, to open before him the two-leaved gates, not treacherously, or timorously, but from a full conviction that it is to no purpose to contend with him; and therefore the gates shall not be shut against him, but he shall admit him as a friend. (4.) The longest and most dangerous marches shall be made easy and ready to him; I will go before thee, to clear the way, and to conduct thee in it, and then the crooked places shall be made straight; or, as some read it, the hilly places shall be levelled and made even. These will find a ready road, that have God going before them. (5.) No opposition will be made to him, but the whole thing will be arranged and set before him by God's commission will break in pieces the gates of brass that are shut against him, and cut in sunder the bars of iron, wherewith they are fastened. This was fulfilled in the letter, if that be true which Herodotus reports, that the city of Babylon had a hundred gates all of brass, with posts and hooks of the same metal.

He shall empty the coffers very much; (v. 3.) I will give thee the treasures of darkness; treasures of gold and silver, that have been long kept close under lock and key, and had not seen the light of many years; or had been buried under ground by the inhabitants, in their fright, upon the taking of the city. The riches of many nations had been brought to Babylon, and Cyrus seized all together. The hidden riches of secret places, which belonged either to the crown or to private persons, shall all
be a pray to Cyrus. Thus God, designing him to do a piece of service to his church, paid him richly for it; and Cyrus, knowing God's goodness to him, and Cyrus very honestly owned God's goodness to him, and, in consideration of that, released the captives; (Ezra i. 2.) God has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and thereby has obliged me to build him a house at Jerusalem.

11. We are here told what God designed, in doing all this for Cyrus. What Cyrus aimed at in undertaking his wars, was, to bring his army in order, and being victorious, to obtain a wonderful success in his wars. Here are told:

1. It was that the God of Israel might be glorified; "That thou mayest know by all this that I the Lord am the God of Israel; for I have called thee by thy name, long before thou wast born. When Cyrus had this prophecily of Isaiah showed him, and there found his own name, and his own achievements particularly described so long before, he shall thereby be brought to acknowledge that the God of Israel is the Lord Jehovah, the only living and true God, and continues to own his Israel, though now in captivity. It is well when thus men's prosperity brings them to the knowledge of God, for too often it makes them forget him.

2. It was that the God of Israel might be revealed, v. 4. He knew not God, as the God of Israel; having been trained up in the worship of idols, the true God was to him an unknown God; but, though he knew not God, God not only knew him when he came into being, but foreknew him, and bespoke him for his shepherd; he called him by his name, Cyrus, my, which was yet a greater honour, he summoned him, and called him his anointed, because God did all this for Cyrus? Not for his own sake, be it known to him; whether he was a man of virtue or no, is questioned. Xenophon indeed, when he would describe the heroic virtues of an excellent prince, made use of Cyrus's name, and many of the particulars of his story, in his Cyropædia; but other historians represent him as haughty, cruel, and blood-thirsty. The reason why God preferred him was, for Jacob his servant's sake. Note, (1.) In all the revolutions of states and kingdoms, the sudden falls of the great and strong, and the surprising advancements of the weak and obscure, God is designing the good of his church. (2.) It is therefore the wisdom of those to whom God has given wealth and power, to use it for his glory, by being kind with it to his people. Cyrus, God's prophet, was released; he shall have a kingdom, only that God's people may have their liberty; for their kingdom is not of this world, it is yet to come. In all this, Cyrus was a type of Christ, who was made victorious over principalities and powers, and intrusted with unspeakable riches, for the use and benefit of God's servants, his elect. When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, took those captives that had taken others captive, and opened the prison to those that were bound.

5. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God besides me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me; 6. That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me: I am the Lord, and there is none else, 7. I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things. 8. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteous couness spring up together. I the Lord have created it. 9. Wo unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What maketh thou? or thy work, He hath no hands! 10. Wo unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?

God here asserts his sole and sovereign dominion, as that which he designed to prove and manifest to the world, in all the great things he did for Cyrus, and by him. Observe, 1. How this doctrine is here laid down, concerning the sovereignty of the great Jehovah, in two things:

1. That he is God alone, and there is no God beside him; this is here inculcated as a fundamental truth, which, if it were firmly believed, would abolish idolatry out of the world. With what an awful, commanding air of majesty and authority, bidding defiance, as it were, to all pretenders, does the great God here proclaim it to the world. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me, no self-existent, self-sufficient Being, none infinite and eternal. And again, (v. 6.) There is none beside me; all that are set up in competition with me are counterfeits, they are all vanity, and a fig, for I am the Lord, and there is none else. This is here said to Cyrus, not only to cure him of the sin of his ancestors, which was, worshipping idols, but to prevent his falling into the sin of some of his predecessors in victory and universal monarchy, which was, setting up themselves for gods, and being idolized, to which some attribute much of the origin of idolatry. Let Cyrus, when he is become thus rich and great, remember that still he is but a man, and there is no God but one.

2. That he is Lord of all, and there is nothing done without him; (v. 7.) I form the light, which is grateful and pleasing, and I create darkness, which is grievous and unpleasing, I make peace, put here for all good, and I create evil, not the evil of sin, God is not the Author of that, but the evil of punishment. I the Lord order and direct, and do all these things. Observe, (1.) The very different events that betide the children of men; light and darkness, opposite to each other, and yet, in the course of providence, sometimes intermixed, like the morning and evening twilights, neither day nor night; (Zech. xiv. 6.) a mixture of joys and sorrows in the same cup, allays to each other; sometimes they are counterbalanced, as noonday light and midnight darkness; in the revolution of every day each takes its turn, and there are short transitions from one to the other; witness Job's case. (2.) The selfsame cause of both, and that is he that is the first Cause of all; I the Lord, the Fountain of all being, am the Fountain of all power. He who formed the natural light, (Gen. i. 3.) still forms the providential light; he who at first made peace among the jarring seeds and sown of men, that takes its turn in the affairs of men; he who allowed the natural darkness, which was a mere privation, to create the providential darkness, for concerning troubles and afflictions he gives positive orders. Note, The wise God has the ordering and disposing of all our comforts and all our crosses in this world.

II. How this doctrine is here proved and published.

1. It is proved by that which God did for Cyrus; "There is no God beside me, for (v. 5.) I girded thee, though thou hast not known me. It was not
thine own idol, which thou didst know and worship, that girded thee for this expedition, that gave thee authority and ability for it. No, it was I that girded thee, I whom thou didst not know, nor seest to." By this it appears that the God of Israel is the only true God, that he manages and makes what use he pleases, even of those that are strangers to him, and pay their homage to other gods.

2. It is published to all the world by the word of God, as fast as possible to be known by the testimony of the suffering Jews in Babylon, that all may know from the east and from the west, sunrise and sunset, that the Lord is God, and there is none else. The wonderful deliverance of the Israel of God proclaimed to all the world that there is none like unto the God of Jehovah, that rides on the heavens for his throne.

11. How this doctrine is here improved and applied:

1. For the comfort of those that earnestly longed, and yet quietly waited, for the redemption of Israel; (v. 8.) Drop down, ye heavens, from above. Some take this as the sign of prayer for the deliverance; I rather take it as God's precept concerning it, for he commands it. Now the precept is directed to heaven and earth, and all the hosts of both, as royal precepts commonly run, To all officers, civil and military. All the creatures shall be made in their places to contribute to the carrying on of this great work, when God will have it done. If men will not be aiding and assisting, God will produce it without them, as he does the dews of heaven, and the grass of the earth, which tarry not for man, nor wait for the sons of men. Mic. v. 7. Observe, (1.) The method of this great deliverance is to be wrought for Israel; righteousness must first be wrought in them, they must be brought to repent of their sins, to renounce their idolatries, to return to God, and reform their lives, and then the salvation shall be wrought for them, and not till then. We must not expect salvation without righteousness, they spring up together, and together the Lord hath created them; what he has joined together, let not us therefore put asunder. See Ps. lxxix. 9. -11. Christ died to save us from our sins, not in our sins, and is made Redemption to us, by being made to us Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy. (2.) There is no great deliverance; rather than it shall fail, when the act time for it is come, the heavens shall drop down righteousness, and the earth shall open to bring forth salvation, and both eminent to the manifestation, and so to the restoration of God's Israel. It is from heaven, from above the skies, that righteousness drops down, for every grace and good gift is from above; yea, since the more plentiful effusion of the Spirit, it is now poured down, and if our hearts be open to receive it, the product will be the fruits of righteousness, and the great salvation.

2. For reproof to those of the church's enemies that opposed this salvation, or those of her friends, that despised of it; (v. 8.) Unto him that striveth with his Maker God is the Maker of all things, and therefore our Maker, which is a reason why we should always submit to him, and never contend with him. (1.) Let not the proud oppressors, in the elevation of their spirits, oppose God's designs concerning the deliverance of his people, nor think to detain them any longer, when the time is come for their release. We to the insulting Ba- bylonians, that set God at defiance, as Pharaoh did, and will not let his people go; (2.) Let not the proud oppressors, in the depreciation of their spirits, murmur and quarrel with God for the prolonging of their captivity, as if he dealt unjustly or unkindly with them, or think to force their way before God's time is come. Note, Those will find themselves in a woful condition, that strive with their Maker; for ever none hardened his heart against God, and prospered. Sinful man is indeed a quaking creature; but be the footsteps strive with the footsteps of the earth: men are but earthen pots, nay, they are broken potsheds, and are made so very much by their mutual contemnitions; they are dashed in pieces one against another; and if they are disposed to strive, let them strive with one another, let them argue with the potters that break them up, and contend with him that is infinitely above them, which is as senseless and absurd as, (1.) For the clay to find fault with the potter; (2.) All the clay to form to him that forms it. "What made thee? Why dost thou make me of this shape, and not that?" Nay, it is as if the clay should be in such haste and confusion with the potters, that they meddle with his hands, or that he works as awkwardly as if he had none. Shall the clay pretend to be wiser than the potter, and therefore to advise him; or mightier than the potter, and therefore to control him? He that gave us being, that gave us this being, may design concerning us, and dispose of us, as he pleases; and it is impudent presumption for us to prescribe to his power, who are ourselves so curiously, so wonderfully, made! Shall we say, He has no hands whose hands made us, and in whose hands we are? The doctrine of God's sovereignty has enough in it to silence all our discontentments and objections against the methods of his providence and grace, Rom. vi. 20, 21. (2.) It is as unnatural as for the child to find fault with the parents; to say to the father, What begettest thou? Or to the mother, "What hast thou brought forth? Why was I not begetten and born an angel, exempt from the infirmities of human nature, and the calamities of human life?" Must not those who are children of men expect to share in the common lot, and to fare as others fare? If God is our Father, where is the honor we owe to him by submitting to his will?

11. Thus saith the Lord the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons; and concerning the work of my hands command me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: 1. even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts have I commanded. 13. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the Lord of hosts. 14. Thus saith the Lord. The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia, and of the Sabeans men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine; they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee, and there is none else; there is no God. 15. Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour. 16. They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols. 17. But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting sa.
vation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. 18. For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth, and made it, he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord, and there is none else. 19. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain. I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

The people of God in captivity, who reconciled themselves to the will of God in their affliction, and were content to wait his time for their deliverance, are here assured that they should not wait in vain.

1. They are invited to inquire concerning the issue of their troubles, v. 11. The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, though he does not allow them to strive with him, yet encourages them, 1. The Lord will give them vent, and have recourse to the prophets and their prophecies, and see what they say concerning these things. Ask the watchmen, What of the night? Ask them, How long? Things to come, as far as they are revealed, belong to us and to our children, and we must not be strangers to them. 2. To seek unto him by prayer; asking for his help. And concerning my children, even concerning the work of my hands, command ye me; so some read it; bring them to me, and leave them with me. See the power of prayer, and its prevalence with God; Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am; what would ye that I should do unto you? Some read it with an interrogation, as carrying on the reproof, (v. 9, 10.) Do ye question me concerning things to come, and am I bound to give you an answer? And concerning my children, even concerning the work of my hands, will you command me, or prescribe to me? Dare you do so? Shall any teach God knowledge, or give law to him? Those that complain of God, do in effect assume an authority over him.

If they are encouraged to depend upon the power of God, when they were brought very low, and were utterly incapable of helping themselves, v. 12. Their help stands in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth; which he mentions here, not only for his own glory, but for their comfort. The heavens and earth shall contribute, if he pleases, to the deliverance of the church; (v. 8.) for he created both, and therefore has both at command. 1. He made the earth, and created man upon it, for it was intended to be a habitation for man, Ps. cv. 16. He has therefore not only authority, but wisdom, and power, sufficient to govern man here on this earth, and to make what use he pleases of him. 2. His hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts he commanded into being at first, and therefore still governs all their motions and influences. It is good news to God's Israel, that his God is the Creator and Governor of the world.

III. They are particularly told what God would do for them, that they might know what to depend upon; and this shall lead them to expect a more glorious Redeemer, and redemption, of whom, and of which, Cyrus, and their deliverance by him, were types and figures.

1. Liberty shall be proclaimed to them, v. 13. Cyrus is the man that shall do it; and, in order hereunto, God will put power into his hands; I have raised him up in righteousness, in pursuance and performance of the prophecies I promised should be performed by the people's just but injured cause. He will give him success in all his enterprises, particularly that against Babylon; I will direct all his ways, and then it follows, I will prosper him; for these must needs speed well that are under a divine direction: and God will make plain the way of those whom he designs to employ for him. Two things Cyrus must do for God; (1.) Jerusalem is God's city, but it is now in ruins, and he must rebuild it, he must give orders for the rebuilding of it, and give wherewithal to do it. (2.) Israel is God's people, but they are now captives, and he must release them freely and generously; not demanding any ransom, or compounding with them for price or reward. And Christ is invited to do that for poor captive souls, which Cyrus was not allowed to do for the captive Jews, to proclaim the opening of the prison to them that were bound, (ch. lxi. 1.) enlargement from a worse bondage than that in Babylon.

2. Provision shall be made for them. They went out poor, and unable to bear the expenses of their return and re-establishment; and therefore it is promised that the labour of Egypt and other nations should come over them. Those who shall have conquered those countries, out of their spoils provided for the returning Jews; and he ordered his subjects to furnish them with necessaries, (Ezra. i. 4.) so that they did not go out empty from Babylon any more than from Egypt. Those that are redeemed by Christ, shall be not only provided for, but enriched. Those whose spirits God stirs up to go to the heavenly Zion, may depend upon Him, to bear their charges. The world is theirs as far as is good for them.

3. Proselytes shall be brought over to them; Men of stature shall come after thee in chains; they shall fall down to thee, saying, Surely God is in thee. This was in part fulfilled when many of the people of the land became Jews, (Esther viii. 17.) and when the Egyptians, by the wise and happy advice of their wise men, were induced to leave to do so, for we have heard that God is with you, Zech. viii. 23. The restoration would be a means of the conviction of many, and the conversion of some. Perhaps many of the Chaldeans who were now themselves conquered by Cyrus, when they saw the Jews going back in triumph, came, and begged pardon for the affronts and abuses they had done them, owned that God was among them, and that he was God alone, and therefore desired to join themselves to them. But this promise was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel-church, when the Gentiles should become obedient by word and deed to the faith of Christ, (Rom. xv. 18.) as willing captives to the church, (Ps. cx. 3.) glad to wear her chains; when an infidel, beholding the work of miracles, would be convinced that God is with them of a truth, (1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.) and shall assay to join himself to them; and when those that had been of the synagogue of Satan, shall come, and worship before the church's feet, and be made to know that God has loved her, (Rev. vii. 9.) and the kings of the earth and the nations shall bring their glory into the gospel-Jerusalem, Rev. x. 11. No Melchizedekian name, nor Babylon, nor Cross, nor host, ever did good to those, though it be in chains, that have God with them.

IV. They are taught to trust God farther than they can see him. The prophet puts this word into
their mouths, and goes before them in saying it; (v. 15.) Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself. 1. God hid himself when he brought them into the trouble; hid himself and was worth, ch. iv. 17. Note, Though God be his people's God, and be merciful, yet sometimes, when they provoke him, he hides himself from them in displeasure, suppresses his favours, and lays them under his frowns; but let them wait upon the Lord that hides his face, ch. vii. 18. 2. He hid himself when he was bringing them out of the trouble. Note, When God is acting as Israel's God and Saviour, commonly his way is in the sea, Ps. xxvii. 2. The salvation of the church is carried on in a mysterious way, by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts working on men's spirits, (Zech. iv. 6.) by weak and unlikely instruments, small and accidental occurrences, and not wrought till the last extremity; but this is our comfort, though God hide himself, we are sure he is the God of Israel, the Saviour, Job xxxvi. 14.

V. They are instructed to triumph over idolaters and all the worshippers of other gods; (v. 16.) They who are makers of idols, not only who frame them, but who make gods of them by praying to them, they shall be ashamed and confounded, when they shall be convinced of their mistakes, and shall be forced to acknowledge that the God of Israel is the only true God, and when they shall be disappointed in their expectations from them, they shall find it is not mere images, but men, who are their own selves. They shall go to confusion, when they shall find that they can neither excuse the sin, nor escape the punishment of it, Ps. cxvii. 7. It is not here and there one more timorous than the rest that shall thus shrink, and give up the cause, but all of them; nay, though they appear in a body, though hand join in hand, and they do all they can to keep one another up, yet they shall go to confusion together; bind them in bundles, to burn them.

VI. They are assured that those who trust in God, shall never be made ashamed of their confidence in him, v. 17. Now that God was about to deliver them out of Babylon, he directed them by his prophet. 1. To look up to him as the Author of their salvation; Israel shall be saved in the Lord, his power, but it shall be treasured up for them in his grace and promise, and so secured to them: they shall be saved in him, for his name shall be their strong tower, into which they shall run, and in which they shall be safe. 2. To look beyond this temporal deliverance, to that which is spiritual, and has reference to another world; to think of that salvation by the Messiah, which is an everlasting salvation, the salvation of the soul, a rescue from everlasting misery, and a restoration to everlasting bliss; “Give diligence to make that sure, for it may be made sure, so sure, that ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. Ye shall not only be delivered from the everlasting shame and contempt which will be the portion of idolaters, Dan. ix. 7, 8.) but be delivered from everlasting danger, and glory. There is a world without end; and it will be well or ill with us according as it will be with us in that world. They who are saved with the everlasting salvation, shall never be ashamed of what they did, or suffered, in the hopes of it; for it will far outdo their expectations, as to be a more abundant reimbursement. The returning captives came home to their first delights and confusions. (Dan. ix. 7, 8.) yet God tells them that they shall not be confounded, but shall have assurance for ever. They who are confounded as penitents for their own sin, shall not be confounded as beholders in God's promise and power.

VII. They are engaged for ever to cleave to God, and never to desert him, never to distrust him. What had been often inculcated before, is here again repeated, for the encouragement of his people to continue faithful to him, and to hope that he would be so to them; I am the Lord, and there is none else. That the Lord we serve and trust in is God alone, appears by the two great lights; that of nature, and that of revelation.

1. It appears by the light of nature; for he made the world, and therefore may justly demand its homage; (v. 18.) "Thus saith the Lord, that created the heavens, and formed the earth, I am the Lord; the sovereign Lord of all, and there is none else. The gods of the heathens did not do this, may, they did not possess, have dominion over the creation. He not only created the creation of the heavens, but enlarges more upon that of the earth, because that is the part of the creation which we have the nearest view of, and are most conversant with. It is here observed, (1.) That he formed it: it is not a rude and inguliges chaos, but cast into the most proper shape and size by infinite wisdom. (2.) That he fixed it. When he had made it, he established it, founded it on its "Thus saith the Lord, that created the heavens, and formed the earth, I am the Lord, and there is none else." Is. xlv. 18.)

2. It appears by the light of revelation; as the works of God abundantly prove that he is God alone, so does his word, and the discovery he has made of himself and of his mind and will by it. His oracles are evidence of his existence, and of his power, as well as of his operations, v. 19. The preference is here placed in three things. All that God has said, is plain, satisfactory, and just. (1.) In the manner of the delivery of it, it is plain and open; I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth. The Pagan deities delivered their oracles out of dens and caverns, with a low and hollow voice, and in ambiguous expressions; these God's familiar spirits, whispered and muttered; (ch. viii. 19.) but God delivered his law from the top of mount Sinai, before all the thousands of Israel, in distinct, audible, and intelligible sounds; Wisdom cries in the chief places of concourse, Prov. i. 20, 21. viii. 1.—3. The vision is written, and made plain, so that he who runs may read it; if it be obscure, who runs, the redoubtable speech shall be repeated in his own defence what God says here: In secret have I said nothing, John xviii. 20. (2.) In the use and benefit of it, it was highly satisfactory; I said not unto the seed of Jacob, who consulted these oracles and governed themselves by them, Seek ye me in vain, as the false gods did to their worshippers, who sought for the living to the dead, ch. viii. 19. The oracles were in our case, not to hold a matter given to those who consulted him, his word is to them a faithful guide; and to those that proved to him, the seed of Jacob are a praying people, it is the generation of them that seek him, Ps. xxiv. 6. And as he has in his word invited them to seek him, so he never denied their believing prayers, nor disappointed their believing expectations. He said not
to them, to any of them, Seek ye me in vain; for he did not think fit to give them the particular thing they prayed for, yet he gave them grace sufficient, and the comfort and satisfaction which was therein equivalent. What was wanting in winter, is true of prayer, it never rots in the skies. God not only gives a gracious answer to, but will be the bountiful Rewarder of, those that diligently seek him. (3.) In the matter of it, it was incontestably just, and there was no iniquity in it; I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right, and commit to the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil. The heathen delites dictated those things to their worshippers, which were the reproach of human nature, and tended to the extirpation of virtue: but God speaks righteousness, dictates that which is right in itself, and tends to make men righteous; and therefore he is God, and there is none else.

20. Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations; they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. 21. Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there is no God else besides me; a just God, and a Saviour: there is none besides me. 22. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. 23. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. 24. Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come; and all that is incensed against him shall be ashamed.

25. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory

What is here said is intended, as before, to the conviction of idolaters, to show them their folly in worshipping gods that cannot help them, and neglecting a God that can. Let all that are escaped of the nations, not only the people of the Jews, but those of other nations that were by Cyrus released out of captivity in Babylon, let them come, and hear what is to be said against their worshipping idols, that they may be convinced of it as well as the Jews; that Babylon, which had of old been the workshop of the world, is now the spectacle of the whole world of God in it. Let the refuges assemble themselves, and come together; God has something to say to them for their own good, and it is this, that idolatry is a foolish sottish thing, upon two accounts:

1. It is setting up a refuge of lies for themselves. They set up the wood of their graven image, for that is the substituted; though they overlay it with gold, deck it with raiment and similar things, still it is but wood. They pray to a god that cannot save; for he cannot hear, he cannot help, he can do nothing; how do they disparage themselves, who give honour to that which is, in no capacity at all to relieve them! Certainly they have no knowledge, or are brutish in their knowledge, who take so much pains, and do so much

pittance, in seeking the favour of a god that has no power.

It is setting up a rival with God, the only living and true God; (v. 21.) "Summon them all, tell them that the great cause shall again be tried, though once adjudged, between God and Baal, bring them near, and let them take counsel together, what to say in defence of themselves and their idols: it shall be, as before, but upon this issue; let them show when any of their gods did with any certainty foretell death and destruction as the Lord has done, and it shall be acknowledged that they have some colour for their pretensions. But none of them ever did; their prophets were lying prophets; but I the Lord have told it from that time, long before it came to pass; therefore you must, etc., there is no God else besides me." (1) None besides is fit to rule; he is a just God, and rules in justice, and will execute justice for those that are oppressed. (2) None besides is able to help; as he is a just God, so is he the Saviour, who can save without the assistance of any, but without whom none can save. Those therefore have no sense of truth and falsehood, good and evil, no, nor of their own interest, that set up any in competition with him.

21. For the comfort and encouragement of all God's faithful worshippers, whoever they are, v. 22. They that worship idols pray to gods that cannot save; but the God of Israel says it to all the ends of the earth, to his people, though they are scattered into the utmost corners of the world, and seem to be lost and forgotten in their dispersion; "Let them but look to me by faith and prayer, look above instruments and second causes, look off from all pretenders, and lock up to me, and they shall be saved." It seems to refer further, to the conversion of the Gentiles that live in the ends of the earth; the most distant nations, when the standard of the gospel is set up, to it shall the Gentiles seek. When Christ is lifted up from the earth, as the brazen serpent upon the pole, he shall draw the eyes of all men to him; they shall all be invited to look unto him, as the ancient Israelites did to the brazen serpent: and so strong is the eye of faith, that by divine grace it will reach the Saviour, and fetch in salvation by him even from the ends of the earth for he is God, and there is none else.

Two things are here promised, for the abundant satisfaction of all that by faith look to the Saviour.

1. That the glory of the God they serve shall be greatly increased, and the cause of the Lord and the Lord's people, that, how much sooner they and their names are depressed, God will be exalted, v. 23. This is confirmed by an oath, that we might have strong consolation; I have sworn by myself, and God can swear by no greater, Heb. vi. 13. The word is gone out of my mouth, and shall not return empty; it is gone forth in righteousness and truth; for it is the most reposable, equitable thing in the world, that he who made all shall be Lord of all: that, since all beings are derived from him, they should all be devoted to him. He has said it, and it shall be made good, I will be exalted, Ps. xlv. 10. He has assured us, (1.) That he will be universally submitted to, that the kingdoms of the world shall become his kingdom, they shall do him homage, to me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess, and the heart shall be brought into obedience to Christ, and made willing in the day of his power, the knee will bow
God, by the prophet here, designing shortly to deliver them out of their captivity, prepares them for that deliverance, by possessing them with a detestation of idols, and with a believing confidence in God, even their own God. 1. Let them see, that God was not in their idolatry; that he could any way obstruct their deliverance, for they should be defected; (v. 1, 2,) but let them trust in that God who had often delivered them, to do it still, to do it now, v. 3, 4. Let them look on the image of the idols of Babylon, and on the promises and predictions of it, and God's power to accomplish them all, v. 9. 11. And let them know that the unbelief of man shall not make the word of God of no effect, v. 12, 13.

1. Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth; their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy laden: they are a burden to the weary beast. 2. They stoop; they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity. 3. Hearken into me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb; 4. And even to your old age I am he; and even to bear hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry, and will deliver you.

We are here told, 1. That these idol gods will certainly fail their worshippers, then when they have most need of them, v. 1, 2. Bel and Nebo were two celebrated idols of Babylon; some make Bel to be a contraction of Baal, others rather think not, but that it was Belus, one of their first kings, who, after his death, was deified. As Bel was a deified prince, so (some think) Nebo was a deified prophet, for so Nebo signifies; so that Bel and Nebo, who were their Jupiter and Mercury, were compared with Belus, and Belus with Bel. Barmabas and Paul layst by Lystra for Jupiter and Mercury. The names of these idols were taken into the names of their princes; Bel into Belshazzar’s, Nebo into Nebuchadnezzar’s and Nebuzaradan’s, &c. These gods they had long worshipped, and in their revels praised them for their successes, (as appears, Dan. v. 4,) and they insulted over Israel, as if Bel and Nebo were too hard for Jehovah, and should detain them in captivity in defiance of their God. Now that this might be no discouragement to the poor captives, God here tells them what shall become of these idols, which they threaten them with. When Cyrus takes Babylon, down go the idols. It was usual then with conquerors to destroy the gods of the places and people they conquer, and the relics of their devotion in the room of them, ch. xxxvii. 19. Cyrus will do so; and then Bel and Nebo, that were set up on high, and looked great, bold, and erect, stoop and bow down at the feet of the soldiers that plunder their temples. And because there is a great deal of gold and silver upon them, which was intended to adorn them, but serves to expose them that rage they carry them away with the rest of the spoil; the carriers’ horses, or mules, are laden with them, and their other idols, to be sent, among other lumber, (for so it seems they accounted them rather than treasure,) into Persia. So far are they from being able to support their worshippers, that they are themselves a heavy load in the waggons, and a burthen to the weary beast. The idols can-
not help one another; (v. 2.) They woop, they bow down, together, they are all alike in toting things, and the way of them is to fall; their worshippers cannot help them; they could not deliver the burden out of the enemies' hand, but themselves (both the idols and the idolaters) are gone into captivity. Let not therefore God's people be afraid of either. When God's ark was taken prisoner by the Philistines, it proved a burthen, not to the beasts, but to the constructor, who were forced to run behind, and take it to be carried. But when Nebi, and those in Israel, are gone into captivity, their worshippers may even give their good word with them, they will never recover themselves.

11. That the true God will never fail his worshippers; "You hear what is become of Bel and Nebi, now hearken to me, O house of Jacob, (v. 3, 4.) Am I such a god as these? No; though you are brought low, and the house of Israel is but a remnant, your God has been, is, and ever will be, your powerful and faithful Protector."

1. Let God's Israel do him the justice to own that he hath hither been kind to them, careful of them, tender over them, and has all along done well for them. Let them own, (1.) That he bare them at first; I have made. Out of what womb came they, but that of his mercy, grace, and promise? He formed them into a people, and gave them their constitution. Every good man is what God makes him. (2.) That he bare them all along; You have been born by me from the belly, and carried from the womb. God began betimes to do them good, as soon as ever they were formed into a nation, nay, when as yet they were very few, and strangers. God took them under a special protection, and suffered no man to do them wrong, Ps. cxv. 12.—14. In the infancy of their state, when they were not only foolish and helpless, as children, but forward and peevish, God carried them in the arms of his power and love, bare them as upon eagles' wings, Exod. xi. 4. Deut. xxxi. 11. Moses had not patience to carry them, as the nursing father does the sucking child; (Numb. xi. 12.) but God bare them, and bare their manners, Acts xiii. 18. And as God began early to do them good, (when Israel was a child, then I loved him,) so he had constantly continued to do them good; he had carried them from the womb to this day. And we may all witness for God that he has been thus gracious to us; we have been borne by him from the belly, from the womb, else we had died from the womb, and given up to it, as when we were of the belly; we have been the constant care of his kind providence, carried in the arms of his power, and in the bosom of his love and pity. The new man is so; all that in us that is born of God, is borne up by him, else it would soon fall. Our spiritual life is sustained by his grace as necessarily and constantly as our natural life by his providence. The saints have acknowledged that God has carried them from the womb of nature, and have encased themselves with the consideration of it, in their greatest straits, Ps. cxix. 9, 10.—lxx. 5, 6, 17.

2. He will then do them the kindness to promise that he will never leave them; he that was their First, will be their Last, that was the Author, will be the Finisher, of their well-being; (v. 4.) "You have been borne by me from the belly, nursed when you were a child; and I will be your Guide, even when I have gathered you, he, when, by reason of your decays and infirmities, you will need help as much as in your infancy."

Israel were now growing old, so was their covenant by which they were incorporated, Heb. viii. 13. Gray hairs were here and there upon them, Hos. vii. 9. And they had fastened their old age, and the calamities of it, by their irregularities; but God will not cast them off now, will not fail them when their strength fails; he is still their God, will still carry them in the same everlasting arms that were laid under them in Moses' time, Deut. xxxiii. 27. He has made them, and owns his interest in them, and therefore he will bear, will bear with their infirmities, and bear them up under their afflictions; "Even I will carry and will deliver them; I will now bear them upon eagles' wings out of Babylon, as in their infancy I bare them out of Egypt." This promise to aged Israel is applicable to every aged Israelite. God has graciously engaged to support and comfort his faithful servants, even in their old age. "Even to your old age, when you grow swift for business, when you are compassed with infirmities, and perhaps your relations begin to grow weary of you; yet I am he; that I am; he that I have been; the very same by whom you have been borne from the belly, and carried from the womb. You may change, but I am the same. I am he that I have promised to be; he that you have found me; he that you would have me to be. I will carry you, I will bear, will bear you up, and bear you out, and will carry you on in your way, and carry you home at last."

5. To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? 6. They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith, and he maketh it a god; they fall down; yea, they worship. 7. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove; yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble. 8. Remember this, and show yourselves men; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. 9. Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; 10. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: 11. Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country; yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it. 12. Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness: 13. I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.

The deliverance of Israel by the destruction of Babylon, (the general subject of all these chapters,) is here insisted upon, and again promised, for the conviction both of idolaters who set up rivals with God, and of oppressors who were enemies to the people of God. 1. For the conviction of those who made and worshipped idols, especially those of Israel who did so, who would have images of their God, as the Babylonians bad of theirs.

1. He challenges them either to frame an image that should be thought a resemblance of him, or to set up any being that should stand in competition with him; (v. 5.) To whom will ye liken me? It is
absurd to think of representing an infinite and eternal Spirit by the figure of any creature whatsoever; it is to change his truth into a lie, and to give an existence in vain to a likeness of him, nor can see his face, and live. To whom then can we liken God? ch. xl. 18. 25. It is likewise absurd to think of making any creature equal with the Creator, who is infinitely above the noblest creatures, yea, or to make any comparison between the creature and the Creator, since, between infinite and finite, there is no similitude.

2. He exposes the folly of those who made idols, and then prayed to them, v. 6, 7. (1.) They were at great charge upon their idols, and spared no cost to fit them for their purpose; They lavish gold out of the bag; no little will serve, and they do not care how much goes, though they pinch their families and weaken their estates by it. How does the profusion of idolaters shame the meanness of many who call themselves God's servants, but are for a religion that will cost them nothing! Some lavish gold out of the bag, to make an idol of it in the house, while others heard up gold in the bag, to make an idol of it in the heart; for covetousness is idolatry, as dangerous, though not so scandalous, as the other. They weigh silver in the balance, either to be made into matter of their idol. (2.) Idolaters, that were most sottish had so much sense as to think that God should be served with the best they had, the best they could possibly afford; they that represented him by a calf, made it a golden one;) or, to pay the workman's wages. The service of sin often proves very expensive. (2.) They were in great care about their idols, and took no little pains about them; (v. 7.) They bear him upon their own shoulders, and hire porters to do it; they carry him, and set him in his place, more like a dead corpse than a living god; they set him on a pedestal, and he stands; they take a great deal of pains to fasten him, and from his place he shall not remove, that they may know where to find him, though at the same time they know he can neither move a hand, nor stir a step, to do them any kindness. (5.) After all, they paid great respect to their idols, though they were but the works of their own hands, and the creatures of their own fancies: when the goldsmith has made it that which they please to call a god, they fall down, yea, they worship it. If they magnified themselves too much in pretending to make a god, as if they would alone for that, they viliified themselves as much more contemptible for what they are absurdly thought to know the original of. And if they were deceived by the custom of their country in making such gods as those, they did no less deceive themselves when they cried unto them; though they knew they could not answer them, could not understand what they said to them, nor so much as reply Yea, or No, much less could they save them out of their trouble. Now, shall any that have some knowledge of, and interest in, the true and living God, thus make fools of themselves?

3. He puts it to themselves, and their own reason; Let that judge in the case; (v. 8.) "Remember this that has been often told you, that senseless helpless things idols are, and show yourselves men, men and not brutes, men and not babes; act with reason, act with resolution, act for your own interest do not forget it in the east at the west, in your front, and in your face, and do not disparage your own judgment as you do when you worship idols." Note, Sinners would become saints, if they would but show themselves men, if they would but support the dignity of their nature, and use aright its powers and capacities. "Many things you have been reminded of; bring them again to mind," recalls them into your memories, and revolve them there; "O ye transgressors, consider your ways, remember whence ye are fallen, and repent, and so recover yourselves."

4. He again produces incontrovertible proofs that he is God, that he, and none besides, is so; (v. 9.) I am God and there is none else, none besides me; I am God and none like me. This is that which we have need to be reminded of again and again; and for proof of it, he refers,

(1.) To the sacred history; "Remember the former things of old, what the God of Israel did for his people in their beginnings, whether he did not that for them, which no one else could, and which the God of gods did not, nor could do, for their worshippers. Remember the things of old, and ye will own that I am God and there is none else." This is a good reason why we should give glory to him as a Nonsuch, and why we should not give that glory to any other, which is due to him alone, Exod. xvi. 11.

(2.) To the sacred prophecy. He is God alone, for it is only that declares the end from the beginning, v. 10. From the beginning of time he declared the end of time, the end of all things; Enoch prophesied, Behold, the Lord comes. From the beginning of a nation, he declares what the end of it will be; he told Israel what should befall them in the latter days, what their end should be, and wished they were so wise as to consider it, Deut. xxxiii. 10. From the beginning of an event he declares what the end of it will be; kind be to the great works, and his works, and when he pleases, he makes them known; further than prophecy guides us it is impossible for us to find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end, Exod. iii. 11. He declares from ancient times the things that are not yet done. Many scripture prophecies which were declared long ago, are not yet accomplished; but the accomplishment of some in the mean time is an earnest of the accomplishing of the rest in due time. By this it appears that he is God, and none else; it is he, and none besides, that can say, and make his words good, "My counsel shall stand, and all the powers of hell and earth cannot control or annul it, nor all their policies correct or counteract it." As God's operations are all according to his counsels, so his counsels shall all be fulfilled in his operations, and none of his measures shall be broken, none of his designs shall miscarry. This yields abundant satisfaction to those who have bound up all their conforts in God's counsels, that his counsel shall undoubtedly stand; and if we are come to this, that whatever pleases God pleases us, nothing can contribute more to make us easy than to be assured of this, that God will do all his pleasures, Ps. cxxxv. 6.

The accomplishment of this particular prophecy, which relates to the elevation of Cyrus, and his agency in the deliverance of God's people out of their captivity, is mentioned for the confirmation of this truth, that the Lord is God, and there is none else; and that the thing that shall shortly come to pass, v. 11. God by his counsel calls a ravenous bird from the east, a bird of prey, Cyrus, who, they say, had a nose like the beak of a hawk or eagle, to which some think this alludes, or, as others say, to the eagle which was his standard, as it was afterward that of the Romans, to which there is supposed to be a reference, Matth. xxiv. 28. Cyrus came from the east at the west, and came out for the benefit of and of those that have hosts at command; and if God gave him a call, he will give him success. He is the man that shall execute God's counsel, though he comes from a far country, and knows nothing of the matter. Note, Even those that know not, and mind not, God's revealed will, are made use of to fulfill the counsels of his secret will, which shall all be punctually accomplished in their season by what hand he pleases. That which is here added, to ratify this particular prediction, may abundantly
show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel; "I have spoken it by my servants the prophets, and what I have spoken is just the same with what I have purposed." For though God has many things in his purposes, which are not in his prophecies, he has nothing in his prophecies but what are in his purposes; and he will do just what he has spoken, and never change his mind; therefore press it to pass, for it is not in the power of any creature to control him. Observe with what majesty he says it, as one having authority; I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; Dictum factum—No sooner said than done; I have purposed it, and he does not say, "I will take care it shall be done," but, "I will do it." Heaven and earth shall pass away sooner than one title of the word of God.

As for the conviction of those that daringly oppose the counsels of God, assurance is here given not only that they shall be accomplished, but they shall be accomplished very shortly, v. 12, 13. This is addressed to the stout-hearted, that is, either, 1. The proud and obstinate Babylonians, that are far from righteousness, far from doing justice, or showing mercy, to all they have power, or might, they say they will never let the oppressed go free, but will still detain them in spite of their petitions or God's predictions; that are far from any thing of clemency or compassion to the miserable; or, 2. The unhumbled Jews, that have been long under the hammer; long in the furnace, but are not broken, are not melted, that, like the unbelieving, murmuring, Israelites in the wilderness, think they are far from God's righteousness, from the performance of his promise, and his appearing to judge for them, and by their distrusts set themselves at yet a further distance from it, and keep good things from themselves, as their fathers, who could not enter into the land of promise because of unbelief. This is applicable to the gospel of Christ, when they rejected it, and followed after the law of righteousness, though they were following after the law of righteousness, they attained not to righteousness, because they sought it not of faith, Rom. ix. 31, 32. They perished, far from righteousness; and it was because they were stout-hearted, Rom. x. 3.

Now to them God says, that, whatever they think, the one in presumption, the other in despair, (1.) Salvation shall be certainly wrought for God's people. If men do not do righteous justice, God will, and his righteousness shall effect that for them, which men's righteousness would not reach to. He will place salvation in Zion, he will make Jerusalem a place of safety and defence to all those who will plant themselves there; thence salvation go forth for Israel his glory. God glories in his Israel; and he will be glorified in the salvation he designs to work out for them; it shall redound greatly to his honour. This salvation shall be in Zion, for thence the gospel shall take rise, (ch. ii. 3.) this will the Redeemer comes, (ch. lix. 20. Rom. xi. 26.) and it is Zion's King that has salvation, Zech. ix. 9. (2.) It shall be very shortly wrought; this is especially insisted on with those who thought it at a distance; "I bring near my righteousness, nearer than the noonday," (Ps. cxvi. 11.) they think, or perhaps it is shall redound all when your stones are greatest, and your enemies most injurious; it shall not be far off when there is occasion for it, Ps. lxxxv. 9. Behold, the Judge stands before the door. My salvation shall not tarry any longer than till it is ripe, and you are ready for it; and therefore though it tarry, wait for it, wait patiently, for he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.

CHAP. XLVII.

Infinite Wisdom could have ordered things so that Israel might have been released, and yet Babylon unhurt; but made to pave the way to Israel's release; that ruin is here, in this chapter, largely foretold, not to gratify a spirit of revenge in the people of God, who had been used barbarously by them, but to make them sensible of the great concernness of their own deliverance, and to be a type of the downfall of that great enemy of the New Testament church, which, in the Revelation, goes under the name of Babylon. Babylon, in this chapter, we have, 1. The greatness of the ruin threatened; that Babylon should be brought down to the dust, and made completely miserable, should fall from the height of prosperity into the depth of adversity, v. 1. 2. The ruin shall be quick to bring this ruin upon them. I. Their cruelty to the people of God, v. 6. 2. Their pride and carnal security, v. 7. 9. 3. Their confidence in themselves, and contempt of God, v. 10. 4. The use of magic arts, and their false pride, which should be so far from standing them in any stead, that they should but hasten their ruin, v. 11. 15.

1. COME down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground; there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans, for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. 2. Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers. 3. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man. 4. As for our Redeemer, the Lord of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel. 5. Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms. 6. I was wroth with my people; I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thy hand; thou didst show them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.

In these verses God, by the prophet, sends a messenger even to Babylon, like that of Josiah v. Nineveh; "The time is at hand when Babylon shall be destroyed." Fair warning is thus given her, that she may by repentance prevent the ruin, and there may be a prolongation of her tranquillity. We may observe here,

1. God's controversy with Babylon; we will begin with that, for there all the calamity begins; she has made God her enemy, and then who can befriend her? Let her know that the righteous Judge to whom vengeance belongs, has said, (v. 3.) I will take vengeance. She has provoked God, and shall be reckoned with for it, when the measure of her iniquities is full. Wo to those on whom God comes to take vengeance; for who knows the power of his anger, and what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands? Were it a man like ourselves, who would be revenged on us, we might hope to be a match for him, either to make our escape from him, or to make our part good with him. But he says, "I will do it not as one man, not with the passions of a man, but I will be to thee as a lion, and a young lion;" (Hos. v. 14.) or, rather, not with the strength of a man, which is easily resisted, but with the power of a God, which may not be resisted. Not with the justice of a man, which may be bribed or biassed, or mollified by a foolish pity, but with the justice of a God, which is strict and severe, and can never be evaded. As in pardoning the penitent, so in punishing the impenitent, he is God, and not man, Hos. xi. 9.

2. The particular ground of this controversy; we are sure that there is cause for it, and it is a just
cause; it is the vengeance of his temple, (Jer. 1.28.) it is for violence done to Zion, Jer. li. 35. God will punish wickedness. (p. 7.) It is also known (v. 6.) that God had, in wrath, delivered his people into the hands of the Babylonians, had made use of them for the correction of his children, and had by their means polluted his inheritance; he had left his peculiar people exposed to suffer in common with the rest of the nations, had suffered the heathen, who should have been kept at a distance, to wreak his sanctuary and defile his temple, Ps. lxxxix. 1. Herein God was righteous; but the Babylonians carried the matter too far, and when they had them in their hands, (triumphing to see a people that had been so much in reputation for wisdom, holiness, and honour, brought thus low,) with a base and servile spirit they trampled upon them, and showed them no mercy, no, not the common instances of humanity, which the miserable are entitled to purely by their misery. They used them barbarously, and with an air of contempt, nay, and of complacency in their calamities. They were brought under the yoke; but as if that were not enough, they laid the yoke on very heavily, adding affliction to the afflicted. Nay, they laid it on the ancient, the elders in years, who were past their labour, and must sink under a yoke which these in their prime, and strength would easily have borne. Elders in office, those that had been judges and magistrates, and persons of the first rank, took a pride in putting them to the meanest, hardest drudgery. Jeremiah laments this, that the faces of elders were not honoured, Lam. v. 12. Nothing brings a surer and sober ruin upon any people than cruelty, especially to God's Israel.

3. The terror of this controversy: she has reason to tremble when she is told who it is that has this quarrel with her, v. 4. "As for our Redeemer, our God, that undertakes to plead our cause as the Avenger of our blood; he has two names which speak not only comfort to us, but terror to our adversaries." (1.) "He is the Lord of hosts, that has all the creatures at his command, and therefore has all power both in heaven and in earth." Wo to those against whom the Lord fighteth, for the whole creation is at war with them. (2.) "He is the Holy One of Israel, a God in covenant with us, who has his residence among us, and will faithfully perform all the promises he has made to us." God's power and holiness are engaged against Babylon, and for Zion. This may fitly be applied to Christ, our great Redeemer; he is both Lord of hosts, and the Holy One of Israel.

4. The consequences of it to Babylon: she is called a virgin, because so she thought herself, though she was the mother of harlots; beautiful as a virgin, and circumspect about all her; she had been called tender and delicate, (v. 1.) and the lady of kingdoms; (v. 5.) but now the case is altered. (1.) Her honour is gone, and she must bid farewell to all the dignities that she had sat at the upper end of the world, sat in state, and sat at ease, must now come down, and sit in the dust, as very mean, and a deep mourner, must sit on the ground, for she shall be so emptied and impoverished, that she shall not have a seat left her to sit upon. (2.) Her power is gone, and she must bid farewell to her dominion; she shall rule no more, and has done; she has none to come to her neighbours; there is no throne, none for thee, O daughter of the Chaldeans. Note, Those that abuse their honour and power, prove God to deprive them of it, and to make them come down, and sit in the dust. (3.) Her ease and pleasure are gone; she shall no more be called tender and delicate as she has been, for she shall not only be deprived of all those things with which she pampered herself, but shall be put to hard service, and made to feel both want and pain, which should be more than doubly grievous to her, who once would not venture to set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy, Deut. xxviii. 56. It is our wisdom not to use ourselves to be tender and delicate, because we know not how hardly others may use us before we die, nor what straits we may be reduced to. (4.) Her liberty is gone, and she is brought into a state of servitude and as were a bondage as she in her prosperity led before her. God will so use the great men of Babylon must now receive the same law from the conquerors, that they used to give to the conquered: "Take the millstones, and grind meal, (v. 2.) set to work, to hard labour," (like beating hemp in Bridewell,) "which will make thee sweat so that thou must throw off all thy head dresses, and uncover thy locks." When they were driven from one place to another, at the capricious humours of their masters, they must be forced to wade up to the middle through the waters; to make bare the leg, and uncover the thigh, that they might pass over the rivers, which would be a great mortification to them that used to ride in state; but let them not complain, for just thus they had used their captives; and with what measure they then meted, it is now measured to them again. Let those that have power use it with temper and moderation, considering that the spade which is uppermost will be under.

5. All her glory, and all her glorying are gone. Instead of glory, she has ignominy; (v. 3.) Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, and thy shame shall be seen; according to the base and barbarous usage they commonly gave their captives, to whom, for covetousness of their clothes, they did not leave rags sufficient to cover their nakedness; so void were they of the modesty, as well as of the pity, due to the human nature. Instead of glorying, she sits silent, and gets into darkness, (v. 5.) ashamed to show her face, for she has quite lost her credit, and shall no more be called the lady of kingdoms. Note, God can make these sit silent, that used to make the greatest noise in the world, and send these into darkness, that used to make the greatest figure. Let him that glories, therefore, glory in a God that changes not, and not in any worldly wealth, pleasure, or honour, which are subject to change.

7. And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it. 3. Therefore hear now this thou that art given to pleasures, that dwell est carelessly; that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else besides me: I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children. 9. But these two things shall come to thee in a moment, in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments. 10. For thou hast trusted thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else besides me. 11. Therefore shall evil come upon thee: thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall
fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off; and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know.

12. Stand now with thy enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.

13. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.

14. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.

15. Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.

Babylon, now doomed to ruin, is here justly upbraided with her pride, luxury, and security, in the day of her prosperity, and the confidence she had in her own wisdom and forecast, and particularly in the prognostications and counsels of the astrologers. These things are mentioned, both to justify God in bringing these judgments upon her, and to mortify her, and to put her to so much the greater shame, under these judgments; for when God comes forth to take vengeance, glory belongs to him, but confusion to the sinner.

I. The Babylonians are here upbraided with their pride and haughtiness, and the conceit they had of themselves, because of their wealth and power, and the vast extent of their dominion; it was the language both of the government, and of the body of the people; Thou sayest in thine heart, (and God, who searches all hearts, can tell men what they say there, though they never speak it out,) I am, and none else beside me, ver. 8. 10. The repetition of this part of the charge intimates that they said it often, and that it was very offensive to God. It is the very word that God has often said concerning himself, I am, and none else beside me; denoting the self-existence, his infinite and incomparable perfections, and his sole supremacy; all this Babylon pretends to. No wonder if she that assumed a power to make what gods and goddesses she pleased for the people to worship, made herself one among the rest. It is presumption to say of any creature, It is, and there is not its like, there is none beside it; for creatures cannot even be upon a level with one another; but it is insufferable arrogance for any to say so of themselves, and an evidence of their self-ignorance.

II. They are upbraided with their luxury and love of ease; (ver. 8.) Thou art given to pleasures, art a slave to them, art them as in thine element, and that thou mayest enjoy them without disturbance or interruption, dwellest carelessly, and layest up treasure for the day of darkness. Great wealth brings a great temptation to sensuality, and where there is fulness of bread, there is commonly abundance of idleness. But if those that are given to pleasures, and dwell carelessly, would but hear this, that for all these things God shall bring them into judgment, it would be a dam to their mirth, an ally to their pleasure, and would find them something to be in care about.

III. They are upbraided with their carnal security, and their vain confidence of the perpetuity of their pomp and pleasures. This is much insisted on here. Observe,

1. The cause of their security. They therefore thought themselves safe and out of danger, not because they were ignorant of the uncertainty of all earthly enjoyments, and the inevitable fate that attends states and kingdoms, as well as particular persons, but because they did not lay this to heart, did not allow of their being new grieves in this case consideration. They balled themselves as safe in idleness and pleasure, and dreamt of nothing else but that to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant. They did not remember the latter end of it; nor the latter end of their prosperity, that it is a fading flower, and will wither; not the latter end of their iniquity, that it will be bitterness, that the day will come when their injustice and oppression must be reckoned for and punished. She did not remember her latter end; so some read it; she forgot that her day will come to fall, and what would be in the end hereof. It was the ruin of Jerusalem, (Lam. i. 9.) that she remembered not her last end, therefore she came down wonderfully; and it was Babylon's ruin too. Therefore the children of men are prouder, and think themselves safe, in their sinful ways, because they never think of death, and judgment, and their future state.

2. The ground of their security. They trusted in their wickedness, and in their wisdom, ver. 10. (1.) Their power and wealth, which they had gotten by fraud and oppression, were their confidence. Thou hast trusted in thy wickedness, as Dchs, Ps. c. 34. 7. Many have so debauched their own consciences, and are got to such a pitch of daring wickedness, that they stick at nothing; and this they trust to, to carry them through these difficulties which embarrass men who make conscience of what they say and do. They doubt not but they shall be too hard for all their enemies, because they dare lie, and kill, and forswear themselves, and do any thing for their interest. Thus they trust in their wickedness to secure them, which is the only thing that will ruin them. (2.) Their policy and craft, which they called their wisdom, were their confidence. They thought they could outwit all mankind, and therefore might set all their enemies at defiance; but their wisdom and knowledge perverted them, and turned them out of the way, made them forget themselves, and the preparation necessary to be made for hereafter.

3. The consequence of their security. Three things this proud and haughty monarchy said, in her security; (1.) I shall be a lady for ever. She looked upon the patent of her honour to be not merely during the pleasure of the sovereign Lord, the Fountain of honour, or during her own good behaviour, but to be perpetual to the present generation and their heirs and successors for ever; she is not only a lady for ever, but she shall be a lady for ever, so that she shall be a lady for ever. Thus the New Testament Babylon says, I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow, Rev. xxi. 7. These ladies mistake themselves, and consider not their latter end, who think they shall be ladies for ever, for death will shortly lay their honour with them in the dust. Saints shall be saints for ever, but lords and ladies (2.) I shall not be a widow, but I shall be a lady for ever. None shall marry, none shall have a husband, none shall be a widow, in solitude and sorrow, shall never lose the power and wealth I am thus wedded to; the monarchy shall never want a monarch to espouse and protect it, and be a husband to the state; nor shall I know the loss of children. She was as confident of the continuance of the numbers of her people as of the dignity of her prince, and had no fear of being either deposed or depopulated. Those that are in the height of prosperity, are apt to fancy them
selves out of the reach of adverse fate. (2.) "No one sees me when I do amiss, and therefore there will be none to call me to an account." It is common for sinners to promise themselves impunity, because they promise themselves secrecy, in their wicked ways. They trust to their wicked arts and designs to stand them in stead, because they think they have carried them on so shamefully that none can discern the wickedness and deceit of them.

There is a caution on this head. It shall be

their ruin; and it will be, (1.) A complete ruin, the ruin of all their comforts and confidences; "These two things shall come upon thee, (the very two things that thou didst set at defiance,) loss of children, and widowhood. Both thy princes and thy people shall be cut off, so that thou shalt be no more a government, no more a nation." Note, God often brings up to men's view, in their latter end, the very things which they least feared, and thought themselves in least danger of; "They shall come upon thee in their perfection, with all their aggravating circumstances, and without any thing to alay or mitigate them." Afflictions to God's children are not afflications in perfection. Widowhood is not to them a calamity in perfection, for they have this to comfort them; so they shall have two daughters for their comfort, which would have been a comfort to them, if they knew, when they were comforted to her; but on their enemies they come in perfection. Widowhood and loss of children are either of them great griefs, but both together great indeed. Naomi thinks she may well be called Morah, when she is left both of her sons and of her husband; (Ruth. 1.) and yet on her these evils did not come in perfection. For she had two daughters-in-law, which were comforts to her; but on Babylon they come in perfection, she has no comfort remaining. (2.) It shall be a sudden and surprising ruin. The evil shall come in one day, nay in a moment, which will make it much the more terrible, especially to those that were so very secure. "Evil shall come upon thee, and thou shalt have neither time nor way to provide against it, or to prepare for it; for thou shalt not know whence it rises, and therefore shalt not know where to stand upon thy guard." Thou shalt not know the morning thereof; so the Hebrew phrase is. We know just when and where the day will break, and the sun rise, but we know not what the day, when it is come, will bring forth, nor when or where trouble will arise; perhaps the storm may come upon them, without any warning beforehand, when they least thought of. Babylon pretended to great wisdom and knowledge, (v. 10.) but with all her knowledge cannot foresee, nor with all her wisdom prevent, the ruin threatened; "Desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, as a thief in the night, which thou shalt not know, which thou little thoughtest of." Fair warning was indeed given them by this and other prophets of the Lord, of this desolation; but they slighted that advice, and would give no credit to it, and therefore justly is it so ordered, that they should have no other notice of it, but that, partly through their own security, and partly through the swiftness and subtilty of the enemy, when it came it should be a perfect surprise to them. Those that slight the warnings of the written word, let them not expect other premunitions. (3.) It shall be a complete ruin of all that they had. They were guilty of offence against; "Mischief shall come upon thee so suddenly, that thou shalt have no time to turn thee in, so strongly, that thou shalt not be able to make head against it, and to put it off and save thyself." There is no opposing of the judgments of God when they come with commission. Babylon herself, with all her wealth and power, and multitude, is not able to stand against that mischief that comes.

IV. They are upbraided with their divisions, their magical and astrological arts and sciences, which the Chaldeans, above any other nation, were notorious for, and from them other nations borrowed all their learning of that kind.

1. This is here spoken of as one of their provoking sins, which would bring the judgments of God upon them, v. 9. These evils shall come upon thee to punish thee for the multitude of thy sorceries, and the great abundance of thine enchantments. Witchcraft is a sin in its own nature, excelling heinousness; for it is giving a lie to God only, making God's enemy our guide, and the father of lies our oracle; in Babylon it was a national sin, and had the protection and countenance of the government; conjurers, for that appears, were their privy counsellors, and prime ministers of state. And shall not God visit for these things? Observe what a multitude, what a great abundance of sorceries and enchantments there were: and such a bewitching sin this was, that, when it was once admitted, it spread like wildfire, and they never knew any end of it; the deceived and the deceivers both increased strangely.

2. It is here spoken of as one of their vain confidences, which they relied much upon, but should be deceived in, for it would not serve so much as to lessen the judgments coming, much less to guard against them.

(1.) They are here upbraided with the mighty pains they had taken about their sorceries and enchantments; Thou hast laboured in them from thy youth. They trained up their young men in these studies, and those that applied themselves to them were indefatigable in their labours about them; these were the kings, and princes, and courtiers, and high judges. Well, let them stand up now with their enchantments, and try their skill in the critical moment. Let them make a stand, if they can, in opposition to the invading enemy, let them stand to offer their service to their country; but to what purpose? Thou art weeds in the multitude of thy counsels of this kind, thou hast advised with them all, but hast received no satisfaction from them; the different schemes they have erected, and the different judgments they have given, have but increased thy perplexity, and tired thee out." In the multitude of such counsellors there is no safety.

(2.) They are upbraided with the variety they had of such kind of people among them, v. 15. They had their astrologers, or viewers of the heavens, and those who could foretell future events by the stars, and by the signs of the zodiac; they could hold the wisdom and power of God in them, but, under pretence of foretelling future events by them, they viewed the heavens, and forgot him that made them, and set their dominion on the earth, (Job. xxxviii. 33.) and has himself dominion over them, for he rides on the heavens. They had their star-gazers, who, by the motions of the stars, their conjunctions and oppositions, and the aspect of the stars in the heavens, and their influence on the earth, could foretell what was to come, and so distinguish themselves from that of the Chaldeans, and therefore how it can escape the censure and contempt which this text has that under; yet I fear there are some who study their almanacks, and regard them and their prognostications, more than their Bibles and the prophecies there.

(3.) They are upbraided with the utter inutility and insufficiency of all these pretenders to do them any kindness in the day of their distress. Let them see whether with the help of their enchantments,
1. **H**EAR ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah; which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth nor in righteousness.

2. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; The Lord of hosts is his name.

3. I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass.

4. Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee; lest thou shouldst say, Mine idol hath done it; and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them.

5. Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it? I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them.

6. They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldst say, Behold, I knew them.

7. Yea, thou hearest not; yea, thou knowest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.

We may observe here,

1. The hypocritical profession which many of the Jews made of religion and relation to God; to those who made such a profession, the prophet is here ordered to apply himself for their conviction and humiliation, that they might own God's justice in what he had brought upon them.

Now observe here,

1. How high their profession of religion soared, that a fair show they made in the flesh, and how far they went toward heaven, what a good livery they wore, and what fine apparel they had on; but a very bad heart.

2. They were the house of Jacob, they had a place and a name in the visible church, Jacob have I loved, Jacob is God's chosen, and they are not only retainers to his family, but descendants from him.

3. They were called by the name of Israel, an honourable name; they were of that people to whom pertained both the giving of the law, and the promises of Israel signifies a prince with God; the people pried themselves in being of that princely race.

4. They came forth out of the waters of Judah, and thence were called Jews; they were of the royal tribe, the tribe of which Shiloh was to come, the tribe that adhered to God when the rest revolted.

5. They were by the

They can prevail against their enemies, or profit themselves, inspire their own forces, or despair that came against them, v. 12. Let them see then if there be them that can do this; these can do the things He makes a trade of divination; let them stand up, and either by their power save thee from these evils that are about thee, or by their foresight make such a discovery of them beforehand, that thou mayest by needful precautions save thyself; as Elisha, by notifying to the king of Israel the motions of the Syrian army, enabled him to save himself not once over, 2 Ki. vii. 3. This the Persian, v. 10. The v. 12. This the v. 12. They were upheld with the wise men themselves in the common ruin, v. 14. They are unlikely to stand their friends in any stead, who cannot secure themselves; they are as stubble at the best, worthless and useless, and they shall be as stubble before a consuming fire. The Persians, to make room for their own wise men, will cut off those of Babylon, that fire shall burn them, and they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame. They can expect no other than to be devoured, who by their sins make themselves fuel to a devouring fire.

When God kindles a fire among them, it shall not be a coal to warm at, and a fire to sit before, but a coal to burn them. Or, rather, it denotes that they shall be utterly consumed by the judgments of God, burnt quite to ashes, and there shall not remain one live coal to do any body any service; for when God judges, he will overcome.

Lastly, they are upheld with the merchants, that dealt with them, v. 15. Such as they dealt with from their youth, either, [1.] In a way of consultation; these astrologers that dealt in the black art, they always loved to be dealing with, and they were in effect their merchants; fortune-telling was one of the best trades in Babylon, and those that followed that trade, probably lived as much, and got as much money as the richest merchants; yet, when some of them were delivered, others fled their country, every one to his quarter, and there was none to save Babylon. Miserable comforters are they all.

Or, [2.] In a way of commerce. As their astrologers, with whom they had laboured, failed them, so did their merchants; they took care to secure their own effects, and then valued not what became of Babylon. They removed to quarters, to find a shift for his own safety, but none would offer to lend an helping hand, not to a city by which they had got so much money. Every one was for himself, but few for his friends. The New Testament Babylon is lamented by the merchants that were made rich by her, but they very prudently stand afar off to lament her, Rev. xvii. 15. not willing to utter their sorrow at the happy day which the accursed day of Babylon, not to speak of the day which God's name was shamed, is to this day. They who by faith and prayer deal with one that will be a very present help in time of trouble.
2. How low their profession of religion sunk, for all this. It was all in vain, for it was all a jest, it was not in truth and righteousness. Their hearts were not in it, nor were they sure of their success.  

All or religious professions avail nothing further than they are made in truth and righteousness. If we be not sincere in them, we do but take the name of the Lord our God in vain. 

11. The means God used, and the method he took, to keep them close to himself, and to prevent their turning aside to idolatry. The many excellent laws he gave them with their sanctions, and the judgements about them, it seems, would not serve to restrain them from that sin which did most easily beset them, and therefore to those God added remarkable prophecies, and remarkable providences in pursuance of those prophecies, which were all designed to convince them that their God was the only true God, and that it was therefore both their duty and interest to adhere to him. 

1. He both dignified and favoured them with remarkable prophecies; (v. 3.) I have declared the former things from the beginning. Nothing material happened to their nation from its original, which was not prophesied of before—their bondage in Egypt, their deliverance thence, the situation of their tribes in Canaan, &c. All these things went for the glory of God, and he showed them. Herein they were honoured above any nation, and even their curiosity gratified—their prophecies were such as they could rely upon, and such as concerned themselves and their own nation; and they were all verified by the accomplishment of them; "I did them suddenly, when they were least expected, by themselves or others, and therefore could not be foreseen, but a divine presence; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass," for what God does he does effectually. The very calamities they were now groaning under in Babylon, God did from the beginning declare to them by Moses; as the certain consequences of their apostasy from God, Lev. xxvi. 31, &c. Deut. xxviii. 36, &c.—xxix. 28. He also declared to them their return to God, and to their freedom again, Deut. xxx. 4, &c. Lev. xxv. 10, &c., xvii. 14, 44, 45. Thus the prophecy foretold should deal with them long before it came to pass. Let them compare their present state together with the deliverance they had now in prospect with what was written in the law, and they would find the scripture exactly fulfilled.  

2. He both dignified and favoured them with remarkable prophecies. (v. 6.) I have showed thee new things from this time. Beside the general view given from the beginning of God's proceedings with them, he showed them new things by the prophets of their own day, and created them; they were hidden things which they could not otherwise know, as the prophet's former prophecies, when the Lord had moved them out of Babylon; these things God created new. Their restoration was in effect their creation, and they had a promise of it not from the beginning, but of late, for, to prevent their apostasy from God, or to recover them, prophecy was kept up among them. Yet it was told them when they could not come to the knowledge of it any other way. 

"How much sooner it is talked of now among you, and expected, it was told you by the prophets, when it was the furtthest thing in your thoughts, when you had not heard it, when you had not known it, nor had any reason to expect it, and when your ear was not opened concerning it, (v. 7, 8.) when the thing seemed utterly impossible, and you would scarcely have given any one the hearing, who should have told you of it." God had shown them hidden things which were out of the reach of their knowledge, and done for them great things, out of the reach of their power; "Now," says he, (v. 6.) "thou hast heard the prophecy; see the accomplishment of it, and observe whether the word and works of God do not exactly agree with it. Wherein have you heard, so you have seen? Will you not own that the Lord is the true God, the only true God, that he has the knowledge and powers which no creature has, and which none of the gods of the nations can pretend to? Will you not own that your God has been a good God to you? Declare this, to his honour, and your own shame, who have dealt so deceitfully with him, and preferred others before him.  

III. The reasons why God would take this method with them. 

1. Because he would anticipate their boastings of themselves and their idols. (1.) God by his prophets told them beforehand of their deliverance, lest they should attribute the doing of it to their idols. Thus he saw it necessary to secure the glory of that to himself, which otherwise would have been given by some of them to their graven images: "I spake of it," (says God,) "lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol has done it, or has commanded it to be done," v. 5. There were those that would be apt to say so, and so would be confirmed in their idolatry by that which was intended to cure them of it. But they would now be forever prevented from this; the prophecies of the idols would have foretold it; but the prophecies of the Lord having foretold it, it was no doubt the power of the Lord that effected it. (2.) God foretold it by his prophets, lest they should assume the foresight of it to themselves. Those that were not so profane as to have ascribed the thing itself to an idol, were yet so proud as to have presumed to have foretold it; as the true God, if God had not been beforehand with them and spoken first; Lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them. Thus vain men, who would be thought wise, commonly undervalue a thing which is really great and surprising, with this suggestion, that it was no more than they expected, and they knew it would come to this. To anticipate this, and that this boasting might be denied by their own sagacity to foretell it, God has said and done enough to prevent men's boastings of themselves, and that no flesh may glory in his presence, which, if it have not the intended effect, will aggravate the sin and ruin of the proud, and, sooner or later, every mouth shall be stopped, and all flesh shall become silent before God. 

3. Because he would leave them insensible in their obstinacy. Therefore he took this pains with them, because he knew they were obstinate, v. 4.
He knew they were so obstinate and perverse, that if he had not supported the doctrine of providence by prophecy, they would have had the impudence to deny it, and would have said, that their idol had done that which God did. He knew very well, (1.) How wilful they would be, and how fully bent they would be upon that which is evil; I knew that thou wouldest hard; so the word is. There were prophecies as well as precepts, which God gave them because of the hardness of their hearts; "Thy neck is an iron yoke, and thy nose a brass. Behold, a king and his men have been rash and sensual to God's commandments, unapt to turn, and look back upon his dealings with thee, or look up to his displeasure against thee; not flexible to the will of God, nor pliable to his intentions, not manageable by his word or providence. Thy brass is brass; thou art impudent, and cannot be blushed; insolent, and wilt not fear or give back, but will thrust on in the way of thine heart." God uses means to bring means to comply with him, though he knows they are obstinate. (2.) How deceitful they would be, and insincere in that which is good, v. 8. God sent his prophets to them, but they did not hear, they would not know, and it was no more than was expected, considering what they had been; Thou wouldest hard, and not miscalled, a transgressor from the womb. Ever since the Lord had first created man, they began to become idolatry; they brought with them out of Egypt a strange addictedness to that sin; and they were murmurers as soon as ever they began their march to Canaan. They were justly upbraided with it then, Deut. ix. 24. Therefore I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously. God foresaw their apostasy, and gave this reason for it, that he had always found them false and fickle, Deut. xxxi. 16, 27, 29. This is applicable to particular persons; we are all born children of disobedience, we were called transgressors from the womb, and therefore it is easy to foresee that we will deal treacherously, very treacherously. Where original sin is, actual sin will follow of course. God knows it, and yet deals not with us according to our deserts.

9. For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. 10. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. 11. For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another. 12. Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he: I am the first, I also am the last. 13. My hand also laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath hewed out the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together. 14. All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these things? The Lord hath loved him; he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans. 15. I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.

The deliverance of God's people out of their captivity in Babylon was a thing upon many accounts so improbable, that there was need of line upon line for the encouragement of the faith and hope of God's people concerning it. Two things were discouraging to them; their own unworthiness that God should do it for them, and the many difficulties in the thing itself; nor are these discouragements removed, for here is,

I. A reason why God would do it for them, though they were unworthy; not for their sake, but for his name's sake, for his own sake, v. 9.—11.

1. It is true, they had been very provoking, and God had been justly angry with them—their captivity was sent upon them for punishment; and when he had them in Babylon, he had left them to pine away and perish there, and made the desolations of their country perpetual, he had but dealt with them according to their sins, and it was what such a sinful people might expect from an angry God. "But," says God, "I will defer mine anger," (or, rather, sitfe and suppress it;) "I will make it appear that I am slow to wrath, and will refrain from thee, not pour upon thee what I justly might, that I should cut thee off from being a people." And why will God thus stay his hand? For my name's sake; because this people was called by his name, and made profession of his name, and, if they were cut off, the enemies would blaspheme his name. It is for my praise; because it would reprove mine enemies and to have mercy upon them, and reprove them, and if he continued them to be to him a people, they might be to him for a name and a praise.

2. It is true, they were very corrupt and ill-disposed, but God would himself reprove them, and make them fit for the mercy he intended for them; "I have refined thee, that thou mightest be made a vessel of honour." Though he does not find them meet for his favour, he will make them so. And this accounts for his bringing them into the trouble, and continuing them in it so long as he did; it was not to cut them off, but to do them good; it was to refine them, but not as silver, or with silver, not so thoroughly as men refine their silver, which they continue in the furnace till all the dross is separated from it; if God should take that course with them, they should be always in the furnace, for they are all dross, and, as such, might justly be put away, (Ps. cxxix. 119.) as reprobate silver, Jer. vi. 30. He therefore takes them as they are, refined in part only, and not thoroughly. "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction, I have made thee a choice one by the good which the affliction has done thee, and then designed thee for great things." Many have been brought home to God as chosen vessels, and a good work of grace been begun in them, in the furnace of affliction. Affliction is no bar to God's choice, but subservient to his purpose.

3. It is true, they could not pretend to merit at God's hand so great a favour as their deliverance out of Babylon, which would put such an honour upon them, and bring them so much joy; Therefore I have refined thee, says God, for my own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it, v. 11. See how the emphasis is laid upon that, for it is a reason that cannot fail, and therefore the resolution grounded upon it cannot fail to the ground. God will do it, not because he owes them such a favour, but to save the honour of his own name, that that may not be polluted by the insolent triumphs of the heathens. God's triumph over the honour of his own name, that he might triumph over the God of Israel, thought they triumphed over the God of Israel, and imagined their gods too hard for him. This was plainly the language of Belshazzar's revels, when he profaned the holy vessels of God's temple at the same time when he praised his idols, (Dan. v. 2.) and of the Babylonians' demand, (Ps. xxxvii. 5.) Sing us one of the songs of Zion. God will therefore deliver his people, but he will not suffer his glory to be thus given to another. Messes pleased this often with
21. **God, Lord, what will the Egyptians say?** Note, God is jealous for the honour of his own name, and will not suffer the wrath of man to proceed any further than he will make it turn to his praise. And it is matter of comfort to God's people, that, whatever comes of them, God will secure his own honour; and, as far as is necessary to that, God will work deliverance for them.

1. Here is a proof that God could do it for them, through the instrument of those he had appointed to help themselves, and the thing seemed altogether impracticable. Let Jacob and Israel hearken to this, and believe it, and take the comfort of it. They are God's called, called according to his purpose, called by him out of Egypt, (Hos. xi. 1) and now out of Babylon, a people whom with a distinguishing favour he calls by name, and to; there are his called, for they are called to him, called by his name, and called his; and therefore he will look after them; and they may be assured that as he will deliver them for his own sake, so he will deliver them by his own strength; they need not fear them, for,

1. He is God alone, and the eternal God; (v. 12.) "I am he, who can do what I will, and will do what is good, and shall not be less contend with; I am the First, I also am the Last." Who can be too quick for him that is the First, or prevent him? Who can be too hard for him that is the Last, and will keep the field against all opposers, and will reign till they are all made his footstool? What room then is left to doubt of their deliverance, when he undertakes it, whose design is over our heads, and it was his hand to well execute, for he is the Last: as for this God, his work is perfect.

2. He is the God that made the world; and he did that can do any thing, v. 13. Look we down? We see the earth firm under us, and feel it so, it was his hand that laid out the foundation of it. Look we up? We see the heavens spread out as a canopy over our heads, and it was his hand that spread them, that spanned them, that stretched them out, and did it by an exact measure, as the workman sometimes metes out his work by spans. This intimates that God has a vast reach, and can compass designs of the greatest extent. **If the palm of his right hand (so the margin reads it) has gone so far as to stretch out the heavens, what will he do with the earth?** And how? Yet it is not only God, that is the Maker of the heavens and the earth, and therefore in whom our hope and help is, omnipotent, (Ps. cxxiv. 8.) but he has the command of all the hosts of both; when he calls them into his service, to go on his errand, they stand up together, they come at the call, they answer to their names; "Here we are, what wilt thou have us to do?" They pay him up, not only in reverence to their Creator, but in a readiness to execute his orders; they stand up together unanimously, concurring, and helping one another in the service of their Maker. If God therefore will deliver his people, he cannot be at a loss for instruments to be employed in it.

3. He has already foretold it, and, having infinite knowledge, so that he foresaw it, no doubt he has also mighty power to effect it; "All ye of the house of Jacob, assemble yourselves, and hear this for your comfort, Which among them, among the gods of the heathen, or their wise men, has declared these things, or could declare them?" v. 14. They had no foresight of them at all, but those who consulted them were very confident that Babylon should be their lord, and Israel a perpetual slave; and their oracles did not give them the least hint to the contrary, to undeceive them; whereas God by his prophets had given notice to the Jews, long before, of their captivity, and the destruction of Jerusalem; so he had now likewise given them notice of their release; (v. 15.) I even I, have spoken; and he would not have spoken it, if he could not have made it good: none could outsee him, and therefore we may be sure that none could outdo him.

4. The person is pitched upon, who is to be employed in this service, and the measures are concerted in the divine councils, which are unalterable. Cyrus is the man who must do it; and it tends much to strengthen our assurance that a thing shall be done, when it shall be no part of the execution or the executioner by whom. It is not left at uncertainty who shall do it, but the matter is fixed: (1.) It is one whom God is well pleased in, upon this account, because he is designed for this service; The Lord has loved him; (v. 14.) he has done him this favour, this honour to make him an instrument of the redemption of his people, and of the salvation of the great Redeemer, God's beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. Those God does a great kindness to, and has a great kindness for, whom he makes serviceable to his church. (2.) It is one whom God will give authority and commission to; I have called him, have given him a sufficient warrant, and therefore will bear him out. (3.) It is one whom God will by a series of miracles will make a way for, and bring him from a far country, brought him to engage against Babylon, brought him step by step, quite beyond his own intentions; Whom God calls he will bring, will cause them to come, (so the word is,) to come at the call. (4.) It is one whom God will own, and give success to. Cyrus will do God's pleasure against Babylon, that which it is his pleasure should be done, and which he will be pleased with the doing of, though Cyrus has ends of his own to serve, and has no regard either to the will of God, or to his favour, in the doing of it. His arm, Cyrus's army, and in God's arm, shall come, and be upon the Chaldeans, to bring them down; (v. 14.) for if God call him, and bring him, he will certainly make his way prosperous, v. 15. Then we may hope to prosper in our way, when we follow a divine call and guidance.

16. Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I and now the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me. 17. Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldst go. 18. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea; 19. Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me. 20. Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeaus, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob. 21. And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them; he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out. 22. There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.

Here, as before, Jacob and Israel are summoned to hearken to the prophetic speaking in God's name.
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or rather to God speaking in and by the prophet, and that as a type of the great Prophet by whom God has in these last days spoken unto us, and that is sufficient; Come ye near therefore, and hear this. Note, Those that would hear and understand the word of God, must come near, and approach to them; let them come as near as they can; let those that have hearkened to the tempter, now come near, and hear this, that they may be confirmed in their resolutions to serve God. Those that draw nigh to God may depend upon this, that his secret shall be with them. Here,

I. To come to what he had both said to them, and done for them, formerly, which if they would reflect upon, they might thence fetch great encouragement to trust in God at this time. 1. He had always spoken plainly to them, from the beginning, by Moses and all the prophets; I have not spoken in secret, but publicly, from the top of mount Sinai, and in the chief places of conourse, the solemn assemblies of their tribes; he did not deliver his oracles obscurely and ambiguously, but so that they might be understood, Hab. ii. 2. 2. He had always acted wonderfully for them; From the time that they were first formed into a people, there am I, there have I been resident among them, and presiding in their affairs. He sent them prophets, raised them up judges, and frequently appeared for them. And therefore there I will be still, even God that has been with his people hitherto, will be to the end.

II. The prophet himself, as a type of the great Prophet, asserts his own commission to deliver this message; Now the Lord God (the same that spake from the beginning, and did not speak in secret,) has by his Spirit sent me, v. 16. The Spirit of God is that which imparts an understanding of the word; ruah, God both the Father and the Son, and having a divine authority to send prophets. Note, Whom God sends the Spirit sends. Those whom God commissions for any service, the Spirit in some measure qualifies for it: and those may speak boldly, and must be heard obediently, whom God and his Spirit send. As that which the prophet says to the same purpose with this (ch. xxv. 1.) is approved of God, as Ix. 19, 1, 2. So may this be; the Lord God sent him, and he had the Spirit without measure.

III. God by the prophet sends them a gracious message for their support and comfort under their affliction. The preface to this message is both awful and encouraging; (v. 17.) Thus saith Jehovah, the eternal God thy Redeemer, that has often been so, that he has engaged him, and will be faithful to the engagement, for he is the Holy One, that cannot deceive, the Holy One of Israel, that will not deceive them. The same words that introduce the law, and gave authority to that, introduce the promise, and gave validity to that; I am the Lord thy God, whom thou mayest depend upon as in relation to thee, and in covenant with thee, and in commission with thee, which God undertakes to fulfil in them; he that is their Redeemer, in order to that, will be, (1.) Their Instructor; I am thy God that teaches thee to profit, teaches thee such things as are profitable for thee, things that belong to thy peace. By this God shows himself to be a God in covenant with us, by his teaching us; (Heb. vii. 27.) He is the Great teacher, that teaches his people the way, and in the way by which they should go; he teaches so, and enlightens their eyes, but directs their steps; by his grace he leads them in the way of duty, by his providence he leads them in the way of deliverance. Happy they that are under such a guidance!

2. Here is the good will which God declares he had for them, by his good wishes concerning them, 18, 19. He has indeed brought them into captivity, but it was their own fault, nor did he afflict them willingly. (1.) When he gave them his law, he earnestly wished they might be obedient, (O that there were such a heart in them! Deut. v. 29. O that they were wise! Deut. xxxii. 29.) so, when he had punished them for the breach of his law, he wished they had been obedient; O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! Ps. cxix. 37. This confirms what God has said and sworn, that he has no pleasure in the death of sinners. (2.) He assures them that if they had been obedient, that would not only have prevented their captivity, but would have advanced and perpetuated their prosperity. He had abundance of good things ready to bestow upon them, If their sins had not turned them away, ch. lix. 1, 2. (1.) They should have been carried on in a constant uninterrupted stream of prosperity: Thy peace should have been as a river, thou shouldst have enjoyed a series of mercies, one continually following another, as the waters of a river, which always last; Labitur, et labitur in omne voluptulis avum—It flows, and will for ever flow; the stream was like the river of God's grace, of which the name was gone. (2.) Their virtue and honour, and the justice of their cause, should in all cases have borne down opposition by their own strength, as the waves of the sea; such should their righteousness have been, nothing should have stood before it; whereas now they have been disobedient, the current of their prosperity was interrupted, and their righteousness was unhindered: the river was stopped; their rights have been very numerous, and very prosperous, whereas they were now very few, as appears by the small number of the returning captives, (Ezra ii. 64.) not so many as of one tribe when they came out of Egypt; they should have been numberless as the sand, according to the promise (Gen. xiii. 17.) which they had forfeited the benefit of; The ebb and flow of thy bowels has been innumerable, so the gravel of the sea, if thy righteousness had been irresistible and unconquerable as the waves of the sea.

4. The honour of Israel had still been unattained, untouched; His name should not have been cut off; as now it is in the land of Israel, which is either desolate, or inhabited by strangers; nor should it have been destroyed from before God. But it cannot be reckoned the name either of a family or of a kingdom, and not destroyed, till it is destroyed from before God, till it ceases to be a name in his holy place. Now God tells them thus what he would have done for them, if they had persevered in their obedience; First, That they might be the more humbled for their sins, by which they had forfeited such rich mercies. Note, This should engage us, I must say, engage us against all that would have us enemies of the cross of Christ, and the good things we have enjoyed, but prevented the good things God had in store for us. It will make the misery of the disobedient the more intolerable, to think how happy they might have been. So costlyly, That his mercy might appear the more illusory in working deliverance and salvation for others, and might make them more indignant to think how unprofitable it was, so that it rendered themselves unworthy of it. Nothing but a prerogative of mercy would have saved them.

5. Here is assurance given of the great work which God designed to work for them, even their salvation out of their captivity, when he had accomplished his work in them.

(1.) Here is a commission granted them to leave Babylon; God proclaimed it long before Cyrus did, that whoever would, might return to his own land,
Glorious things have been spoken in the chapters before, concerning the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon; but lest any should think, when it was accomplished, that it looked much greater and brighter in the prophecy than in the performance, and that the return of about 40,000 Jews to their own land, out of Babylon, to Jerusalem, was not an event sufficiently answering to the height and grandeur of the expressions used in the prophecy, he here comes to show that the prophecy had a further indication and way to have its full accomplishment in a redemption that should as far outdo these expressions as the other seemed to come short of them; even the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, of whom all others were a prelude, who, when he redeemed the Jews' deliverance, redeemed the Gentiles also, and gave him of the success of his undertaking among the Gentiles, v. 3. 8. III. The redemption that should be wrought by him, and the progress of that redemption, v. 9. 13. IV. The encouragement given hence to the afflicted church, v. 13. 17. V. The addition of many to it, and the setting up of a church among the Gentiles, v. 18. 23. VI. A ratification of the prophecy of the Jews' release out of Babylon, which was to be the figure and type of all these blessings, v. 24. 26. If this chapter be rightly understood, we shall see ourselves to be more concerned in the prophecies relating to the Jews' deliverance out of Babylon than we thought we were.

1. LISTEN, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. 2. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me; and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me. 3. And said unto me, Thou art my servant O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. 4. Then said I, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain yet surely my judgment is with the Lord and my work with my God. 5. And now saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. 6. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Here, I. An auditory is summoned together, and attention demanded. The sermon in the chapter before was directed to the house of Jacob and the people of Israel, v. 1. 12. But this is directed to the isles, the Gentiles, for they are called the isles of the Gentiles out of Babylon, and to the people from far, that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and afar off. Let these listen (v. 1.) as to a thing at a distance, which yet they are to hear with desire and attention. Note, 1. The tidings of a Redeemer are sent to the Gentiles, and to those that lay most remote; and they are concerned to hear them to their advantage. The Gentiles are listened to the gospel, when the Jews were deaf to it.

II. The great Author and Publisher of th-
destruction produces his authority from heaven for the work he had undertaken. 1. God had appointed him, and set him apart for it; The Lord has called me from the womb to this office, and made mention of my name, nominated me to be the Saviour: by an angel he called him Jesus—a Saviour, who should save his people from their sins, Matth. i. 21. Nay, from the womb he was called, who he was called to this service, and help was laid upon him; and he came to the call, for he said, Lo, I come, with an eye to what was written of him in the volume of the book. This was said of some of the prophets, as types of him, Jer. i. 8. Paul was separated to the apostleship from his mother's womb, Gal. i. 15. 2. God had fitted and qualified him for the office, and to the service which he was designed him; he made him of the earth as a sharp sword, and made him like a polished shaft, or a bright arrow; furnished him with every thing necessary to fight God's battles against the powers of darkness, to conquer Satan, and reduce God's revolting subjects to their allegiance, by his word, that is, the two-edged sword (Heb. iv. 12.) which comes out of his mouth, Rev. xix. 15. The convictions of the word are the sword of the Spirit, the sheath of which is the heart, Ps. xlv. 3. God had preferred him to the service for which he had reserved him; He has hid me in the shadow of his hand and in his quiver, which denotes, (1.) Concealment: the gospel of Christ, and the calling in of the Gentiles by it, were long hidden from ages and generations, hidden in God, (Eph. iii. 5. Rom. xvi. 25.) hidden in the shadow of the Gentiles, the Old Testament types. (2.) Protection: the house of David was the particular care of the Divine Providence, because that blessing was in it. Christ in his infancy was sheltered from the rage of Herod. 4. God had owned him; had said unto him, Thou art my Servant, whom I have employed, and will use; to succeed; thou art Israel in effect, the Prince with the war clouds, and the sword, and the battle. His people are Israel, and they are all gathered together, and summed up, as it were, in Christ, the great Representative of all Israel, as the High Priest who had the names of all the tribes on his breastplate; and in him God is, and will be, glorified; so he said by a voice from heaven, John xxi. 22, 23. Some read the words of the heavenly voice, as if they would according to the lxx, (Exod. xii.) I am in Israel whom I will glorify by thee; it is the spiritual Israel, the elect, in the salvation of whom by Jesus Christ God will be glorified, and his free grace for ever admired.

III. He is assured of the good success of his undertaking; for whom God calls, he will prosper. And as to this,

He accepts the discouragement he had met with at his first setting out; (v. 4.) "Then I said, with a sad heart, I have laboured in vain; those that were ignorant, and careless, and strangers to God, are so still; I have called and they have refused, I have stretched out my hands to a gainsaying people." This was Isaiah's complaint, but it was no more than he was bid to expect, ch. vi. 9. This was a temptation to Jeremiah to resolve to labour no more, Jer. xx. 9. It is the complaint of many a faithful minister, that has not entered, but laboured, not spared, but spent, his strength, and himself with it, and yet, as to many, it is all in vain, and for naught, they will not be prevailed with to repent and believe. But here it seems to point at the obstinacy of the Jews who rejected Christ. God had appointed him, and given him the charge of preaching the gospel of the kingdom, laboured, and spent his strength, and yet the rulers and the body of the nation rejected him and his doctrine; so very few were brought in, when one would have thought none should have stood out, that he might well say, "I have laboured in vain, preached so many sermons, wrought so many miracles, in vain." Let not the ministers think it strange that they are slighted, when the Master himself was.

2. He comforts himself under this discouragement with this consideration, that it was the cause of God in which he had engaged him; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, who is the Judge of all, and my work with my God, whose servant I am. His comfort is, and it may be the comfort of all faithful ministers, when they see little success of their labours, (1.) That, however it be, it is a righteous cause that they are pleasing; they are with God, and for God, there are on his side, and workers together with him. They like not their judgment, the rule they go by, nor their work, the business they are employed in, ever the worse for this; the unbelief of men gives them no cause to suspect the truth of their doctrine, Rem. iii. 5. (2.) That their management of this cause, and their prosecution of this work, were known to God, and they could appeal to him concerning their sincerity and integrity, and the work that was undertaken. Theirs that they laboured in vain; "He knows the way that I take; my judgment is with the Lord, to determine whether I have not delivered my soul, and left the blood of them that perish on their own heads." (3.) Though the labour be in vain as to those that were laboured with, yet not as to the labourer himself, if he be faithful: his judgment is with the Lord, who will justify him and himself; he will not be spurned, and run him down; and his work, the reward of his work, is with his God, who will take care he shall be no loser, no, not by his lost labour. (4.) Though the judgment be not yet brought forth unto victory, nor the work to perfection, yet both are with the Lord, to carry them on, and give them success, according to his purpose, in his own way and time. He receives from God a further answer to this objection, v. 5, 6. He knew very well that God had set him on work, had formed him from the womb to be his servant, had not only called him so early to it, (v. 1.) but begun so early to fit him for it, and dispose him to it. Those whom God designs to employ as his servants, he is fashioning and preparing to be so long before, when perhaps neither themselves nor others were aware of it. It is he that forms the spirit of man within him. Christ was to be his Servant, to bring Jacob again to him, that had treacherously departed from him; the seed of Jacob, therefore, according to the flesh, must first be dealt with, and means used to bring them back, Christ, and the word of salvation by him, are sent to them first, nay, Christ comes in person to them only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But what if Jacob will not be brought back to God, and Israel will not be gathered? So it proved; but this is a satisfaction in that case.

(1.) Christ will be glorious in the eyes of the Lord; and those are truly glorious, that are so in God's eyes. Though few of the Jewish nation were converted by Christ's preaching and miracles, and many of those who heard him were deaf and dull, yet God put honour upon him, and made him glorious, at his baptism, and in his transfiguration, spake to him from heaven, sent angels to minister to him, made even his shameful death glorious by the many prodigies that attended it, much more his resurrection. In his sufferings, God was his Strength, so that though he met with all the downfall of men, and was rejected by them, he was exalted by God, and was privileged to do the work of God for the people whom he had done so much to oblige, yet he did not fail, nor was discouraged. An angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him, Luke xxii. 43. Faithful ministers, though they see not the fruit of
their labours, shall yet be accepted of God, and in that they shall be truly glorious, for his favour is our honour; and they shall be assisted to proceed and persevere in their labours notwithstanding. This weakens their hands, but their God will be their Strength.

2. The gospel shall be glorious in the eyes of the world; though it be not so in the eyes of the Jews, yet it shall be entertained by the nations, (v. 6.) The Messiah seemed as if he had been primarily designed to bring Jacob back, v. 5. But he is here told that it is comparatively but a small matter; a higher orb of honour than that, and a larger sphere of usefulness, are designed him: "It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my Servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, to exalt the dignity and dominion they expect by the Messiah, and to restore the preserved of Israel, and make them a flourishing church and state as formerly;" (nay, considering what a little handful of people they are, it would be but a small matter, in comparison, for the Messiah to be the Saviour of them only;) and therefore, "I will give thee for a Light to the Gentiles, many great and mighty nations, shall come, and do homage thereto; or the glory of Christ shall be brought to the knowledge and worship of the true God, that thou mayest be my Salvation, the Author of that salvation which I have designed for lost man, and this to the end of the earth, to nations at the greatest distance," Hence Simeon learned to call Christ a Light to lighten the Gentiles; (Luke ii. 32.) and St. Paul's exposition of this text is worth mentioning, Acts xiii. 47. Therefore, says he, we turn to the Gentiles, to preach the gospel to them, because so has the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles. In this, the Redeemer was truly glorious, though Israel was not gathered; the setting up of his kingdom in the Gentile world was more of his honour, than if he had raised up all the tribes of Jacob. This promise is in part fulfilled already, and will have a further accomplishment if that time be yet to come, which the apostle speaks of when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. Observe, God calls it his salvation, which some think intimates how well pleased he was with it, how he gloried in it, and (if I may so say) how much his heart is further raised up, when Christ is given for a Light to all those to whom he is given for salvation. It is in darkness that men perish; Christ enlightens men's eyes, and so makes them holy and happy.

7. Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. 3. Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages: 9. That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves; they shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. 10. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them; for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. 11. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. 12. Behold, these shall come from far; and, lo, those from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

In these verses, we have,

1. The humiliation and exaltation of the Messiah; (v. 7.) The Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and Israel's Holy One, who had always taken care of the Jewish church, and wrought out for them those deliverances that were typical of the great salvation, speaks here to him who was the Undertaker of that salvation. And, 2. He takes notice of his humiliation, the instances of which were uncommon, nay, unparalleled. He was one whom men despised; (ch. lii. 3.) he is despised and rejected of men. To be despised by so mean a creature, (man, who is himself a worm,) bespeaks the lowest and most contemptible condition imaginable. Man, whom he came to save, and to put honour upon, yet despised him; and people, who should have been most grateful were his persecutors. The ignominy he underwent was not the least of his sufferings; they not only made him despicable, but odious; he was one whom the nation abhorred; they treated him as the worst of men, and cried out, Crucify him, crucify him. The nation did it, the Gentiles as well as Jews, and the Jews herein worse than Gentiles; for they crossed already, and not only rejected and despised him, but the other foolishness. He was a servant of rulers, he was trampled upon, abused, scourged, and crucified as a slave. Pilate boasted of his power over him, John xix. 10. This he submitted to for our salvation. 2. He promises him his exaltation. Honour was done him, even in the depth of his humiliation. Herod the king stood in awe of him, saying, It is John the Baptist: no men, rulers, centurions, came and knelt to him; but this was more fully accomplished when kings received his gospel, and submitted to his yoke, and joined in the worship of him, and called themselves the vassals of Christ. Not that Christ values the rich more than the poor, (they stand upon a level with him,) but it is for the honour of his kingdom among men, when the greatest ones of the earth appear for him, and make him an image to him. This shall be the accomplishment of God's promise, that he will give him the heathen for his inheritance, and therefore it shall be done, because of the Lord, who is faithful and true to his promise; and it shall be an evidence that Christ had a commission for what he did, and that God had chosen him, and would own the choice he had made.

II. The blessings he has in store for all those to whom he is made salvation.

1. God will own and stand by him in his undertaking; (v. 8.) In an acceptable time have I heard thee, that is, I will hear thee. Christ, in the days of his flesh, offered up strong cries, and was heard, Heb. v. 7. He knew that the Father heard him always, (John xxi. 42.) heard him for himself, (for though the cup might not pass from him, yet he was enabled to drink it,) heard him for all that are his, and therefore he interceded for them as one having authority, Father, I will, John xvii. 24. All our happiness results from the Son's interest in the Father, and the prevalence of his intercession, that he always heard him; and this makes the gospel-time an acceptable time, welcome to us, because we are accepted of God, both reconciled and recommended to him, that God hears the Redeemer for us, Heb. vii. 25. Nor will he hear him only, but help him to go through with his undertaking. The
Father was always with him at his right hand, and did not leave him when his disciples did. Violent attacks were made upon our Lord Jesus by the powers of darkness, when it was their hour to have driven him off from his undertakings, but God promised to preserve him, and enable him to persevere in it; on that one stone of seven eyes, Zech. iii. 9. God would preserve him, would preserve his interest; his kingdom among men, though fought against on all sides. Christ is preserved while Christianity is.

2. God will authorize him to apply to his church the benefits of the redemption he is to work out. God’s preserving and helping him was to make the day of his gospel a day of salvation. He says of the apostle under a large head, Behold, now is the day of salvation; now is the hour of reconciliation by Christ is preached, 2 Cor. vi. 2.

(1.) He shall be a Guarantee of the treaty of peace between God and man; I will give thee for a covenant of the people. This we had before, (ch. xlii. 6.) and it is here repeated as faithful, and well worthy of all acceptance and observation. He is given for a covenant, for a pledge, to be the securest and most perfect thing. It was to tell him that God was reconciling the world to himself, and he that spared not his own Son, will deny nothing. He is given for a Covenant, not only as he is the Mediator of the covenant, the blessed Days-man who has laid his hand upon us both, but as he is all in all in the covenant. All the duty of the covenant is summed up in our being his and all the privilege and happiness of the covenant are summed up in his being ours.

(2.) He shall repair the decays of the church, and build it upon a rock. He shall establish the earth, or rather, the land, the land of Judah, a type of the church; he shall cause the desolate heritages to be inherited; so the cities of Judah were after the return out of captivity, and so the church, which in the last and degenerate ages of the Jewish war, had been as a country laid waste, but was again replenished by the fruits of the preaching of the gospel.

(3.) He shall free the souls of men from the bondage of guilt and corruption, and bring them into the glorious liberty of God’s children. He shall say to the prisoners that were bound over to the justice of God, and bound under the power of Satan, for disobedience, that mercy is restored from the curse of the law, and renewing grace is a release from the dominion of sin; both are from Christ, and are branches of the great salvation; it is he that says, Go forth; it is the Son that makes us free, and then we are free indeed. He saith to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves; “Not only see but be seen, to the glory of God, and your own comfort.” When he discharged the leash from the confinement, he tells them, Go show yourselves to the frost; when we see the light, let our light shine.

(4.) He shall provide for the comfortable passage of those whom he sets at liberty, to the place of their rest and happy settlement, v. 9—11. These verses refer to the provision made for the Jews’ return out of their captivity, who were taken under the particular care of the Divine Providence, as we have seen; and now so in a special manner; but it is applicable to that guidance of divine grace, which all God’s spiritual Israel are under, from their release out of bondage to their settlement in the heavenly Canaan. [1.] They shall have their charges borne, and shall be fed at free ease with food convenient; They shall feed on the ways, as sheep; for now, as formerly, God leads Joseph like a flock. When God pleases, even highway ground shall be good ground for the sheep of his pasture to feed in. Their pastures shall be not only in the valleys, but in all high places, which are commonly dry and barren. Wherever God brings his people, he will take care they shall want nothing that is good for them. Ps. xxiii. 4-6. And so well shall they be provided for, that they shall hunger nor thirst, for he who leadeth them shall supply them with all things needful, in their time of want, to the very extremity. [2.] They shall be sheltered and protected from every thing that would injure them; Neither shall the heat nor sun smite them. For God causes his flock to rest at noon, Cant. i. 7. No evil thing shall befall those that put themselves under a divine protection; they shall be enabled to hear the burnish of heat and be of the day.

And God will preserve their property, even that which is in the earth. He that has mercy on them, in bringing them out of their captivity, shall lead them, as he did their fathers in the wilderness, by a pillar of cloud and fire; Even by springs of water, which will be ready to them in their march, shall he guide them. God will furnish them with suitable and seasonable comforts, not like the pools of rain-water in the valley of Baca, but like the water out of the rock which followed Israel. These who are under a divine guidance, and follow that closely, while they do so, may, upon good grounds, hope for divine comforts and cordials. The world leads its followers by broken cisterns, or breaks that fail in summer; but God leads those that are his by springs of water. And those whom God guides, shall find a ready road, and all obstacles removed; v. 11. All the mountains a way. He that in times past made the sea a way, now with as much ease will make the mountains a way, though they seemed impassable. The highway, or causey, shall be raised, to make it both the plainer and the fairer. Note, The ways in which God leads his people, he himself will be the Overseer of, and will take care that they be well mended, and kept in repair, as of old the ways led from the cities to the highways. The levelling of the roads from Babylon, as it was foretold, (ch. xlii. 2, 3,) was applied to gospel-works, and so may this be. Though there be difficulties in the way to heaven, which we cannot by our own strength get over, yet the grace of God shall be sufficient to help us over them, and to make even the mountains a way, ch. xxxv. 8.

(5.) He shall make them all things together from all parts, that they may return in a body, that they may encourage one another, and be the more taken notice of. They were dispersed into several parts of the country of Babylon, as their enemies pleased to prevent any combination among themselves. But when God’s time is come to bring them home together, one spirit shall animate them all that lie at the greatest distance from each other; and those also that had taken shelter in other countries, shall meet them in the land of Judah, v. 12. Here shall a party come from far, some from the north, some from the west, some from the land of Sinim, which, probably, is some province of Babylon, not elsewhere named in scripture. But some make it to be a country belonging to one of the chief cities of Egypt, called Sin, of which we read, Ezek. xxxi. 16. But that this promise was to have a further accomplishment in the great confluence of converts to the gospel-church, and its full accomplishment when God’s chosen shall come from the east and from the west, to sit down with the patriarchs in the kingdom of God, Math. viii. 11.

13. Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted 14. But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. 15
Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. 16. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. 17. Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers, and they that made thee waste, shall go forth of thee.

The scope of these verses is to show that the return of the people of God out of their captivity, and the eternal redemption to be wrought out by Christ, (which was a type of,) would be great occasions of joy to the church, and great proofs of the tender care God has of the church.

1. Nothing can furnish us with better matter for songs of praise and thanksgiving, v. 13. Let the whole creation join with us in songs of joy, for it shares with us in the benefits of the redemption, and all they can contribute to this sacred melody, is little enough in return for such inestimable favours, Ps. xcvii. 11. Let there be joy in heaven, and let the earth be glad, for the Lord our Redeemer; let the earth and the mountains, particularly the great ones of the earth, be joyful, and break forth into singing, for the earnest expectation of the creature that waits for the glorious liberty of the children of God, (Rom. viii. 19, 21.) shall now be abundantly answered; God's people are the blessings and ornaments of the world, and therefore let there be universal joy, for God has comforted his people that were in sorrow, and he will have mercy upon the afflicted because of his compassion, upon his afflicted because of his covenant.

2. Nothing can furnish us with more convincing arguments, to prove the most tender and affectionate concern God has for his church, and her interests and comforts.

1. The troubles of the church have given some occasion to question God's care and concern for it, v. 14. Zion, in distress, said, The Lord has forsaken me, and looks after me no more; My Lord has forgotten me, and will look after me no more. See how deplorable the case of God's people may be sometimes, such that they may seem to be forsaken and forgotten of their God; and at such a time to think that they may be deserted, Infidels, in their presumption, say, God has forsaken the earth, (Ezek. viii. 12.) and has forgotten their sins, Ps. x. 11. Weak believers, in their despondency, are ready to say, "God has forsaken his church, and forgotten the sorrows of his people." But we have no more reason to question his promise and grace, than we have to question his providence and justice. He is as sure a Redeemer as he is a Revenger. Away therefore with these distrusts and jealousies which are the bane of friendship.

2. The triumphs of the church, after her troubles, will in due time put the matter out of question. What God will do for Zion, we are told, v. 17. (1.) Her friends, who had deserted her, shall be gathered to her, and shall contribute their utmost to her joy and justice. He is as sure a Redeemer as he is a Revenger. Away therefore with these distrusts and jealousies which are the bane of friendship.

Thy destroyers, and they who made thee waste, who had made themselves masters of the city, and ravaged it, shall go forth of thee. By Christ, the prince of this world, the great destroyer, is cast out, is dispossessed, his power broken, and his attempts quite baffled.

Now by this it will appear that Zion's suggestions were altogether groundless, that God has not forsaken her, or forgotten her, nor ever will. Be assured.

1. That God has a tender affection for his church and people, v. 15. In answer to Zion's fears, God speaks as one concerned for his own glory; he takes himself to be reflected upon, if Zion say, The Lord has forsaken me; and he will clear himself. As one concerned also for his people's comfort, he would not have them droop and be disconsoled, and give way to any uncool thoughts. You think that I have forgotten you; can a woman forget her sucking child? First, It is not likely that she should. A woman, whose honour it is to be of the tender sex as well as the fair one, cannot but have compassion for a child, which, being both harmless and helpless, is a proper object of compassion. And secondly, especially, cannot but be concerned for her own honour; the forgetting of her child, is a piece of herself, and very lately one with her. A nursing mother, most of all, cannot but be tender of her sucking child; her own breasts will soon put her in mind of it, if she should forget it. But, Secondly, It is possible that she may forget. A woman may perhaps be so unhappy as not to be able to remember her sucking child, she may be sick, and dying, and going to the land of forgetfulness; or, she may be so unnatural as not to have compassion on the son of her womb, as those who, to conceal their shame, are the death of their children as soon as they are their life. Lam. iv. 10. Dunt. xxviii. 57. But, says God, I will not forget thee. Note, God's compassion to his people infinitely exceed these of the tenderest parents toward their children. What are the affections of nature to these of the God of nature!

2. That he has a constant care of his church and people; (v. 16.) I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands. This does not allude to the foolish art of palmistry, which imagines every man's fate to be engraven in the palms of his hands, and that he is legible in the lines there; but to the custom of those who tie the writing of their names upon their hands, to put them in mind of things which they are afraid they shall forget; or to the wearing of signet or locket-rings in remembrance of some dear friend. His setting them thus as a seal upon his arm, deputes his setting them as a seal upon his heart, and his being ever mindful of them and their interest, Cant. vii. 6. If we bind God's law as a sign upon our hand, (Deut. xi. 18.) we will engrave our interests as a sign on his hand, and will look upon that and remember the covenant. He adds, Thy walls shall be continually before me; thy ruined walls, though no pleasing spectacle, shall be in my thoughts of compassion. Do Zion's friends favour thy dust? Ps. ci. 14. So does her God. Or, The plant and meed of thy walls, that are to be rebuilt, is before me, and will be, as before, and will be, according to it. Or, "Thy walls (thy safety) shall be my continual care; so are the watchmen on the walls." Some apply his graving of his church on the palms of his hands to the wounds in Christ's hands when he was crucified; he will look on the marks of them, and remember those for whom he suffered and died.

18. Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith
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the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all as with an ornament, and bind them on thee as a bride's dress. 19. For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. 20. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place for me that I may dwell. 21. Then shalt thou say in thy heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? 22. Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. 23. And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

Two things are here promised, which were to be in part accomplished in the reviving of the Jewish church, after its return out of captivity, but more fully in the planting of the Christian church, by the preaching of the gospel of Christ; and we may take the comfort of these promises.

1. That the church shall be replenished with great numbers added to it. It was promised, (v. 17.) that her children should make haste; that promise is here enlarged upon, and is made very encouraging. It is promised,

1. That multitudes shall flock to the church from all parts, Ez. 13. 6. and see how they gather themselves to thee, (v. 18.) by a local accession to the Jewish church. They come to Jerusalem from all the adjacent countries, for that was then the centre of their unity; but, under the gospel, it is by a spiritual accession to the mystical body of Christ in faith and love; those that are come to Jesus as the Mediator of the new covenant, whereby come to the mount Zion, the church of the first-born, Heb. xii. 22. Lk. vii. 33. even eyes, and behold how the fields are white unto the harvest, Johniv. 55. Note, It is matter of joy to the church to see a multitude of converts to Christ.

2. That such as are added to the church shall not be a burthen and blemish to her, but her strength and ornament. This part of the promise is confirmed with an oath, As I live, saith the Lord, that shall not be: nor yet shall the children of such numbers to the church shall complete her clothing; and when all that were chosen are effectually called, then the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall have made herself ready, shall be quite dressed, Rev. xix. 7. They shall make her to appear comely and considerable; and she shall therefore bind them on with as much care and complacency as a bride does her ornaments. When those that are added to the church, are serious and holy, and exemplary in their conversation, they are an ornament to it.

3. That thus the country which was waste and desolate, and without inhabitants, (ch. v. 9.—vi. 11.) shall be again peopled, nay, it shall be over-peopled; (v. 19.) "Thy waste and thy desolate places, that have long lain so, and the land of thy destruction, that land of thine which was destroyed with thee, and which nobody cared for dwelling in, shall now be so full of inhabitants, that every one of them that passeth by shall say, Where are these? Here is a blessing poured out till there be not room enough to receive it, Mal. iii. 10. Not that they should be crowded by their enemies, or straitened for room, as Abraham and Lot were, because of the Canaanitish in the land; "No, they that swallowed thee up, and took possession of thy land when thy possession of it was discontinued, shall be far from thee, and thy power shall be so full, that the unreason of these shall be no stranger, no enemy, among them." Thus the kingdom of God among men, which had been impoverished and almost depopulated, partly by the corruptions of the Jewish church, and partly by the abominations of the Gentile world, was again peopled and enriched by the setting up of the Christian church, and by its graces and glories.

4. That the new converts shall strangely increase and multiply. Jerusalem, after she has lost abundance of her children by the sword, famine, and captivity, shall have a new family growing up instead of them; children which she shall have after she has lost the other, (v. 20.) as Seth, who was appointed another seed instead of Abel, and Job's children, which God blessed him with instead of those he was killed in the ruins of the house. God will repair his church's losses, and secure himself a seed to serve him in it. It is promised to the Jews, after their return, that Jerusalem shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets, Zech. viii. 5. The church, after it has lost the Jews, who will be cut off by their own infidelity, shall have abundance of children still, more than she had when the Jews belonged to her. See Gal. iv. 27. They shall be so numerous, that, (1.) The children shall complain for want of room; they shall say, (and it is a good hearing,) "Our numbers increase so fast, that the place is too strait for us;" as the sons of the prophets complained, 2 Kings vi. 1. But-strait as the place is, still more shall desire to be admitted, and the church shall gladly admit them, and the Lord himself shall let his Spirit rest upon them, Gen. xlviii. 20. (2.) The mother shall stand amazed at the increase of her family, v. 21. She shall say, Who has begotten me these? and Who has brought up these? They have been in all the duty, affection, and submission of children; and yet she never bore any pain for them, nor took any pains with them, but has them ready reared to her hand. This gives her a pleasing surprise, and she cannot but be astonished at it, considering what her condition had been very lately, and very long. The Jewish nation had left her children, they were cut off, she had been desolate, with their enemies, and tempest. But these tokens of God's especial care to them; nay, she had been a captive, and continually removing to and fro, in an unsettled condition, and not likely to bring up children either for God or herself. She was left alone in obscurity: This is Zion whom no man seeks after; left in all the solitude and sorrow of a widowed state. How then came she to be thus replenished? See here, if that the church is not perpetually visible, out there are times when it is desolate, and left alone, and
made few in number. (2.) That yet on the other hand its desolations shall not be perpetual, nor will it for ever remain. God will raise up stones to raise up children unto Abraham. (3.) That sometimes this is done in a very surprising way, as when a nation is born at once, ch. lxvi. 5. That this shall be done with the help of the Gentiles, v. 22. The Jews were cast off, among whom it was expected that the church should be built up; but it was left to the Gentiles, the earth, and from thence to re-plant a fruitful crop, Hos. 23. 

Observe, (1.) How the Gentiles shall be called in; God will lift up his hand to them, to invite or beckon them, having all the day stretched it out in vain to the Jews, (ch. lxxv. 2.) Or it denotes the exerting of an almighty power, that of his Spirit and grace, to compel them to come in, to make them willing. And he will set up his standard to them, the preaching of the everlasting gospel, to which they shall gather, and under which they shall list themselves. (2.) How they shall come; They shall bring thy sons in their arms. They shall assist the sons of Zion, which are found among them, in their return to their own country, and shall forward them with as much tenderness as ever any parent was with his child. Each of the nations can raise up friends for returning Israelites, even among Gentiles; the earth helped the woman, Rev. xii. 16. Or, "When they come themselves, they shall bring their children, and make them thy children;" compare ch. ix. 4. "Dost thou ask, Who has begotten and brought up these? Know, that thou hast begotten and brought up them among all the Gentiles, but they are now brought into thy family." Let all that are concerned about young converts, and young beginners in religion, learn hence to deal very tenderly and carefully with them, as Christ does with the Lambs, whom he gathers with his arms, and carries in his bosom.

II. That the church shall have a great and powerful interest in the nations, v. 23. Some of the princes of the nations shall become patrons and protectors to the church: Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, to carry thy sons in their arms, v. 22. As Moses, Numb. xi. 12. And because women are the most proper nurses, their queens shall be thy nursing mothers. This promise was in part fulfilled in the Jews, after their return out of captivity; divers nations vouchsafed to them their protection and countenance. Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes; Esther the queen was a nursing mother to the Jews that remained in their captivity, putting her life in her hand to snatch the child out of the flames. The Christian church, after a long captivity, was happy in some such kings and queens as Constantine and his mother Helena, and afterward Theodosius, and others, who nursed the church with all possible care and tenderness. Whenever the sceptre of government is put into the hands of religious princes, then this promise is fulfilled. The church, in this world, is in an infant state, and it is in the power of princes and magistrates to do it a great deal of service; it is happy when they do so, when their power is a praise to them that do well. 2. Others of them, who stand it out against the church's interests, will be forced to yield, and to repent of their opposition; They shall bow down to thee, and lick the dust. The promise to the church of Philadelphia seems to be borrowed from this; (Rev. iii. 9.) I will make them of the synagogue of Satan to come and worship before the foot of the tree. Or, it may be meant of the willing subjection which kings and kingdoms shall pay to Christ, the church's King, as he manifests himself in the church? (Ps. lxii. 11.) All kings shall fall down before him. And by all this it shall be made to appear, (1.) That God is the Lord, the sovereign Lord of all, against whom there is no standing out, or rising up. (2.) That those who wait for him, in a dependence upon his promise, and a resignation to his will, shall not be made ashamed of their hope; for the vision of peace is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and shall not lie.

24. Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? 25. But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. 26. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord anilly Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

Here is, 1. An objection started against the promise of the Jews' release out of their captivity in Babylon, suggesting that it was a thing not to be expected; for, (v. 24.) they were a prey in the hand of the mighty, of such as were then the greatest potentates on earth, and therefore it was not likely they should be rescued by force; yet that was not so, they were to be set free; for, though God, having offended, they were justly delivered into captivity; and by the law of nations, being taken in war, they were justly detained in captivity till they should be ransomed or exchanged. Now this is spoken either, (1.) By the enemies, as justifying themselves in their refusal to let them go; they plead both might and right. Proud men think all their own that they can lay their hands on, and their title good if they have but the longest sword. Or, (2.) By their friends; either in a way of distrust, despairing of the deliverance, "For who is able to deal with those that detain us, either by force of arms or a treaty of peace?" Or, in a way of thankfulness, admiring the deliverance, "Who could have thought that ever the prey should be taken from the hand of the mighty?" Or, it is applicable to our redemption by Christ; as to Satan, we were a prey in the hand of the mighty, and yet delivered even from him that had the power of death, by him that had the power of life. As to the justice of God, we were lawful captives and yet delivered by a price of inestimable value.

2. This objection answered by an express promise, and a further promise; for God's promises being all yea, and amen, they may well serve to corroborate one another.

(1.) Here is an express promise with a non-obstante— notwithstanding to the strength of the enemy; (v. 25.) "Even the captives of the mighty, though they are mighty, shall be taken away, and it is no purpose for them to oppose it; and the prey of the terrible, though they are terrible, shall be delivered; and as they cannot with all their strength withstand, so they cannot with all their impudence outface, the deliverance, and the counsels of God concerning it." The Lord saith thus, who, having all power in his hands, and all hearts, is able to make his enemies his footstool.

(2.) Here is a further promise, showing how, and in what way, God will bring about the deliverance. He will bring judgments upon the oppressors, and so will work salvation for the oppressed; "I will contend with him that contends with thee, will plead thy cause against those that justify themselves in
Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away. 2. Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea: I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst. 3. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.

Those who have professed to be the people of God, and yet seem to be dealt severely with, are apt to complain of God, and to lay the fault upon him, as if he had been hard with them. But, in answer to their murmurings, we have here,

I. A challenge given them to prove, or produce any evidence, that the quarrel began on God's side, v. 1. They could not say that he had done them wrong. They had a History of their own, and it was a History of what they had done to others; they not only thirst after blood, but drink it so greedily, that they are drunken with it, and with as much pleasure as if it were sweet wine. If God had not more mercy on sinners than they would have one another upon, were their passions let loose, the world would soon be an Acedama, may, a desolation.

A (lastly) see what will be the effect of Babylon's ruin; All flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour; God will make it to appear, to the conviction of all the world, that, though Israel seem lost and cast off, they have a Redeemer, and though they are made a prey to the mighty, Jacob has a Mighty One, who is able to deal with all his enemies. God intends, by the deliverances of his church, both to notify, and to magnify, his own name.

CHAP. L.

In this chapter, I. Those to whom God sends are justly charged with bringing all the troubles they were in upon themselves, by their own wilfulness and obstinacy; it being made to appear that God was able and ready to help them, if they had been fit for deliverance, v. 1-3. II. He calls them, reproaches his compassion for them (v. 4) alleges his own readiness to submit to all the services and sufferings he was called to in the execution of his will, v. 5,6. and assures himself that God, who sent him, would stand by him, and hear him out against all opposition, v. 7-8. III. The message that is sent is, life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse; comfort to despising saints, and terror to presuming sinners, v. 9-11. Now all this seems to have a double reference; 1. To the unbelieving Jews in Babylon, who quarrelled with God for his dealings with them: and to the prophet Isaiah, who, though dead long before the execution of God's judgments, is spoken of as if he were alive, to tell them that he is fit to produce his credentials, to justify what he had said. 2. To the unbelieving Jews in our Saviour's time, whose own fault it was, that they were rejected; Christ having preached much to them, and suffered much from them, and being herein borne up by a divine power. The contents of this chapter, in our Bibles, give this sense of it, very concisely; thus: Christ shows that the devil is not to be blamed for the persecutions of his people, but that it is the fault of the Jews, who having been carried away by the spirit of contention, and having pride and presumption in their hearts, have provoked the Lord to make their own calamitations their blessing, and have turned their persecutors into their helpers. The Jews, therefore, must be charged with the crimes of their children, as being accessory to their sins, and the sin of their ancestors.
grace; "Do you lay it upon me?" (says God,) 
"Tell me then, wherefore when I came, there was no man to meet me, when I called, there was none to answer me," v. 2. God came to them by his servants the prophets, demanding the fruits of his vineyard; (Matth. xxi. 34.) he sent them his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending them; (Jer. xxxv. 15.) he called to them to leave their sins, and so prevent their own ruin: but there was no man, or next to none, that had any regard to the warnings which the prophets gave them, none that answered the call of God, or complied with the messages sent them; and this was it for which they were sold and put away; because they mocked the messengers of the Lord, therefore God brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16, 17. Last of all, he sent unto them his Son, he came to his own, but his own received him not; he called them to himself, but there were none that answered him; he had gathered Jerusalem's children together, but they would not, they knew not, because they would not know, the things that belonged to their peace, nor the day of their visitation, and for that transgression it was that they were put away, and their house left desolate, Matth. xxv. 41. —xxvii. 37, 38. Luke xix. 41, 42. When God calls men to happiness, they shall not answer, they are justly left to be miserable. 2. It is plain that it was not owing to a want of power in God, for he is almighty, and could have recovered them from so great a death, nor was it owing to a want of power in Christ, for he is able to save to the uttermost. The unbelieving Jews in Babylon thought they were not delivered because their God was not able to deliver them; and those in Christ's time were ready to ask, in scorn, Can this man save us? For himself he cannot save. "But," (says God) "is my hand shortened at all, or is it weakened? Can any limits be set to Omnipotence? Can he redeem, who is the great Redeemer? Has he no power to deliver, whosoever is his power? To put to silence, and to put for ever to shame, their doubts concerning his power, he here gives unquestionable proofs of it. (1.) He can, when he pleases, dry up the rivers, and make the rivers a wilderness; he did so for Israel when he redeemed them out of Egypt, he can do so again for their redemption out of Babylon. It is done at his pleasure, as easily as with a word's speaking; he can so dry up the rivers, as to leave the land of Egypt dry. This was the punishment of Egypt. When God turned the waters of Egypt into blood, he slew the fish, Ps. cv. 29. The expression our Saviour sometimes used concerning the power of faith, that it will remove mountains, and plant cyanamores in the seas, is not unlike this; if their faith could do that, no doubt, their faith would save them, and therefore they were inexcusable if they perished in their unbelief. (2.) He can, when he pleases, eclipse the lights of heaven, clothe them with blackness, and make sackcloth their covering, by thick and dark clouds interposing, which he balances, Job xxxvi. 32.—xxxvii. 16. 4. The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning; he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. 5. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. 6. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. 7. For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. 8. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. 9. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

Our Lord Jesus, having proved himself able to save, here shows himself as willing as he is able to do. We suppose the prophet Isaiah to say something of himself, as a type of Christ, and sometimes to be himself going in his work, as a prophet, notwithstanding the many hardships he met with, not doubting but that God would stand by him, and strengthen him; but, like David, he speaks of himself as a type of Christ, who is here prophesied of, and promised to be the Saviour.
any thing to purpose in his service, it is he, who, as our Master, calls us up; we should do perpetually, if he did not waken us morning by morning.

11. As a patient Sufferer, v. 5, 6. One would think that he who was commissioned and qualified to speak comfort to the very sick, should not without difficulty deliver the soul of the blasphemer, but universal acceptance; it is, however, quite otherwise; he hath both hard work to do, and hard usage to undergo; and here he tells us with what undaunted constancy he went through with it. We have no reason to question but that the prophet Isaiah went resolutely in the work to which God had called him, though we read not of his undergoing any such hardships as are here supposed. Observe, (1.) What he did was resolutely and undauntedly verified in Jesus Christ: and here we have,

1. His patient obedience in his suffering-work. "The Lord God has not only wakened my ear to hear what he says, but has opened my ear to receive it, and comply with it; (Ps. xl. 6, 7.) Mine ear hast thou opened; then said I, Lo, I come;" for when he told me, I was not rebellious, neither turned away back, more is implied than expressed—that he was willing, that, though he foresaw a great deal of difficulty and discouragement, though he was to take pains, and give constant attendance as a Servant, though he was to pay himself of that which was very great, and humble himself to that which was very mean, yet he did not fly off, did not fail, nor was discouraged. He continued very free and forward to do, even when he was crushed with the weight of it. Note, As a good understanding in the truths of God, so a good will to the work and service of God, is from the grace of God.

... His obedient patience in his suffering-work, call it obedient patience, because he was patient with an eye to his Father's will; thus pleading with himself, This commandment have I received of my Father; and thus submitting to God, Not as I will, but as thou wilt. In this submission, he resigned himself, (1.) To be scourged; I gave my back to the smiters; and that not only by submitting to it when he was smitten, but by permitting it (or admitting it rather) among the other instances of pain and shame which he would voluntarily undergo for us, (2.) To be buffeted; I gave my cheeks to them that not only smote them, but plucked off the hair of the beards, and tore off the garments; (3.) To be spurned; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. He could have hid his face from it, could have avoided it, but he would not, because he was made a Reprisal of men, and thus he would answer to the prostrate, Job, that man of sorrows, of whom it is said, that they smote him on the cheek reproachfully, (Job xlvii. 10.) and spared not to spit in his face, (Job xxx. 10.) an expression only of contempt, but of abhorrence and indignation. All this Christ underwent for us, and voluntarily, to convince us of his willingness to save us.

111. As a courageous champion, v. 7.—9. The Redcross is as famous for his boldness as for his humility and patience, and, though he yields, yet he is more than a workman.

Observe, 1. The dependence he has upon God. What was the prophet Isaiah's support, was the support of Christ himself, (v. 7.) The Lord God will help me; and again, v. 9. Whom employs he as will assist, and will take care they want not any help that they or their work call for. God, having said help upon his Son for us, gave help to him, and his hand was up to all along with the Man of his right hand. Nor will he assist him in his work, without the consent of him; (v. 8.) He is near that justifieth me. Isaiah, no doubt, was falsely accused, and loaded with reproach and calumy, as other prophets were; but he despised it, knowing that God would roll away the reproach, and bring forth his righteousness as the light, perhaps in this world, (Ps. xxxvii. 6.) at furthest in the great day, when there will be a resurrection of names as well as bodies, and the righteous shall shine forth as the morning sun. So it was verified in Christ; by his resurrection he was proved an innocent, not a blasphemcr, not a deceiver, not an enemy to Caesar. The judge that condemned him, owned he found no fault in him; the centurion, or sheriff, that had charge of his execution, declared him a righteous man: so near was he that justified him. But it was true of him in a further and more peculiar sense; the Father justified him, when he adopted him for his Son; for he accepted him for the sinned man, and constituted him the Lord our Righteousness, which was made sin for us: he was justified in the Spirit, 1 Tim. iii. 16. He was near who did it; for his resurrection, by which he was justified, soon followed his condemnation and crucifixion; he was straightway glorified, John xiii. 32.

2. The confidence which he had upon God for success in his undertaking; "If God will help me, if I will justify me, will stand by me, and bear me out, I shall not be confounded, as these are that come short of the end they aimed at, and the satisfaction they promised themselves; I know that I shall not be ashamed. "Though his enemies did all they could to put him to shame, yet he kept his ground, he kept his countenance, and was not ashamed of the work he had undertaken, and the business on hand: he knew that we should not be ashamed of; and hope in God is hope that we shall not be ashamed of. Those that trust in God for help shall not be disappointed; they know whom they have trusted, and therefore know they shall not be ashamed.

3. The defiance which, in this confidence, he bids to all opposers and opposition; "God will help me, I will therefore give him offence, and so be put to shame. "The prophet did so, he was held in reprover sin and warning sinners, (Ezek. iii. 8, 9.) and in asserting the truth of his predictions. Christ did so; he went on in his work, as Mediator, with unshaken constancy, and undaunted resolution, he did not fail, nor was discouraged; and here he challenges all his opposers, (1.) To enter the lists with him: Who will contend with me, either in law, or by the sword? Let us battle: and the total allies of his opposers, (2.) To be a defendant. Who is mine adversary? Who is the master of my cause? so the word is, Who will pretend to enter an action against me? Let him appear, and come near to me, for I will not abase. Many offered to dispute with Christ, but he put them to silence. The prophet speaks this in the name of all faithful ministers; these who keep close to the pure word of God, in delivering their message, need not fear contradiction, the scriptures will bear them out, whoever contends with them. Great is the truth, and will prevail. Christ speaks this in the name of all believers, speaks it as their Champion. Who dares be an enemy to those whom he is a Friend to, or contend with those for whom he is an Advocate? Thus St. Paul applies it, (Rom. xiii. 3.) Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? (2.) He challenges them to prove him, as one having a warrant, (Matt. x. 28.) Who is he that shall condemn me? The prophet, perhaps, was condemned to die; Christ, we are sure, was, and yet both could say, Who is he that shall condemn me? For there is no condemnation to them whom God justifies. There were those that did condemn them, but what came of them? They shall wax old, as a garment. To righteous causes of Christ and his ministers, the soul will outlive all opposition. The moth shall eat them up silently and insensibly; a little thing will serve to destroy them. But the roaring lion himself shall not prevail against God's witnesses. All believers
are consoled to make this challenge. Who is he that shall condemn? It is Christ that died.

10. Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. 11. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of my hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.

The prophet, having the tongue of the learned given him, that he might give to every one their portion, here makes use of it, rightly dividing the word of truth. It is the summary of the gospel: he that believeth shall be saved, he that trusts in the name of the Lord shall be comforted, though for awhile he walk in darkness, and have no light. But he that believes not shall be damned; though for awhile he walk in the light of his own fire, yet he shall lie down in sorrow.

I. Comfort is here spoken to disconsolate saints, and they are encouraged to trust in God's grace, v. 10. Where observe,

1. What is always the character of a child of God; he is one that fears the Lord with a final fear, that stands in awe of his majesty, and is afraid of incurring his displeasure. This is a grace that usually appears most in good people then when they walk in darkness, when other graces appear not. They then tremble at his word; (ch. lxvi. 2.) and are afraid of his judgments. Ps. cxix. 120. He is one that obeys the voice of God's servant; is willing to be rules by the Lord Jesus, as God's servant in the great work of man's redemption; one that yields a sincere obedience to the law of Christ, and cheerfully comes up to the terms of his covenant. Those that truly fear God will obey the voice of Christ.

2. What is sometimes the case of a child of God. It is supposed, that though he has in his heart the fear of God, and faith in Christ, yet for a time he walks in darkness, and has no light, is disquieted, and has his spirit perplexed. What does this? This intimates that it is a case which sometimes happens among the professors of religion, yet not very often; but whenever it happens, God takes notice of it. It is no new thing for the children and heirs of light sometimes to walk in darkness, and for a time not to have any glimpse or gleam of light. This is not meant so much of the comforts of this life, (those that fear God, when they have every so slight an abundance of them, do not walk in them as their light,) as of their spiritual comforts, which relate to their souls. They walk in darkness, when their evidences for heaven are clouded, their joy in God is interrupted, the testimony of the Spirit is suspended, and the light of God's countenance is eclipsed. Pensive Christians are apt to be melancholy, and those who fear always, to fear too much.

3. What is likely to be an effectual cure in this sad case. He that is thus in the dark, (1.) Let him trust in the name of the Lord, in the goodness of his nature, and that which he has made known of himself, his wisdom, power, and goodness. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, let him run into that. Let him depend upon it, that if he walk before God, which a man may do though he walk in the dark, he shall find God all-sufficient to him. (2.) Let him stay himself upon his God, his covenant; let him keep hold of his covenant-relation to God, and call God his God, as Christ on the cross, My God, My Lord. Let him stay himself upon the promises of the covenant, and build his hopes on them. When a child of God is ready to sink, he will find enough in God to stay himself upon. Let him trust in Christ, for God's name is in him; (Exod. xxviii. 21.) trust in that name of his, The Lord our Righteousness, and stay himself upon God as his God, in and through a Mediator.

II. Conviction is here spoken to presuming sinners, and those that are warned not to trust in themselves, v. 11. Observe, 1. The description of them. They kindle a fire, and walk in the light of that fire; they depend upon their own righteousness, offer all their sacrifices, and burn all their incense, with that fire, (as Nadab and Abihu,) and not with the fire from heaven; in their hope of acceptance with God, they have no regard to the righteousness of Christ, they refuse to release themselves with a concord of their own merit and sufficiency, and were themselves with that; it is both light and heat to them. They compass themselves about with sparks of their own kindling. As they trust in their own righteousness, and not in the righteousness of Christ, so they place their happiness in their worldly possessions and enjoyments, and not in the favour of God. Creation may learn from them, that as children were punished for that sin which destroyed the world; yet the children of this world, while they last, warm themselves by them, and walk with pride and pleasure in the light of them. 2. The doom passed upon them; they are ironically bid to walk in the light of their own fire. *Make your best of it, while it lasts. This shall ye have of mine hand, (says Christ, for to him the judgment is committed,) ye shall be reproved of the righteous for the light which ye have gone;* but the righteous for the light which ye have gone. See Job xviii. 5, 6. His candle shall be put out with him. Those that make the world their comfort, and their own righteousness their confidence, will certainly meet with a fatal disappointment, which will be bitterness in the end. A godly man's way may be melancholy, but his end shall be peace and everlasting light. A wicked man's way may be pleasant, but his end and endless abode will be utter darkness.

CHAP. I. I.

This chapter is designed for the comfort and encouragement of those that fear God and keep his commandments, even then when they walk in darkness, and have no light, is disquieted, and has his spirits perplexed. He tells us, that the part of the captives in Babylon, is not certain, probably it was, but comforts thus generally expressed ought not to be so confined. Whenever the church of God is in distress, and the people of God are delivered, or when friends and others may comfort themselves and one another, with these words; I. That God, who raised his church at first out of nothing, will take care that it shall not perish, v. 1. II. That the righteousness and salvation he designs for his church are sure and near, very near and very sure, v. 4. 8. III. That the persecutors of the church are weak and dicing creatures, v. 7. 8. IV. That the same power which did wonders for the church formerly, is now engaged and employed for her protection and deliverance, v. 9. 11. V. That God himself, the Maker of the world, had undertaken both to deliver his people out of their distress, and to ensure them the end; he will ensure them of it, v. 12. 16. VI. That, deplorable as the condition of the church now was, (v. 17. 20.) to the same woful circumstances her persecutors and oppressors should shortly be reduced, and worse, v. 20. 23. The three first paragraphs of this chapter begin with, Hearken unto me, and they are God's people that are all along called to hearken; for even when comforts are taken to them, he tells them that they shall hear of the coming of spirit, (Exod. vi. 9.) therefore they are again and again called to hearken, v. 1. 4. 7. The two other paragraphs of this chapter begin with, Awake, awake; in the former, (v. 5.) be reduced, and worse, v. 20. 23. God calls upon them to awake, and help themselves. In the latter, (v. 17.) God calls upon them to awake, and help themselves.

1. Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the
LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit, whence ye are digged. 2. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. 3. For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places, and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Observe, 1. How the people of God are here described, to whom the word of this consolation is sent, and who are called upon to hearken to it. v. 1. They are such as follow after righteousness, as are very desirous and solicitous both to be justified and to be sanctified, are pressing hard after this, to have the favour of God restored to them, and the image of God renewed on them. These are they that seek the Lord, and it is only in the way of righteousness that we can seek him with any hope of finding him.

2. How they are here directed to look back to their original, and the smallness of their beginning; "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn," (the idolatrous family in Ur of the Chaldees, out of which Abraham was taken, the generation of slaves which the heads and fathers of their tribes were in Egypt.) "Hew the hole of that pit out of which ye were digged, as clay, when God formed you into a people." Note, It is good for those that are privileged by a new birth, to consider what they were by their first birth: how they were conceived in iniquity and shapen in sin. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh: how hard was that rock out of which we were hewn, unfit to receive impressions; and how the hole of that pit out of which we were digged! The consideration should fill us with low thoughts of ourselves, and high thoughts of divine grace. Those that are now advanced, would do well to remember how they began; (v. 2.) "Look unto Abraham your father, the father of all the faithful, of all that follow after the righteousness of faith as he did;" (Rom. iv. 11.) and unto Sarah that bare you, and whose daughters you all are; how Abraham was hewn, and yet was blessed and multiplied; and let that encourage you to depend upon the promise of God, even then when a sentence of death seems to be upon all the means that lead to the performance of it. Particularly let it encourage the captives in Babylon, though they are reduced to a small number, and few of them left, to hope that yet they shall increase so as to replenish their own land again, when Jacob is very small, yet he is not so small as Abraham was, who yet became father of many nations. "Look unto Abraham, and see what he got by trusting in the promise of God, and take example by him to follow God with an implicit faith." 3. How they are here assured that their present sadness of tears should at length end in a harvest of joy: "I will increase so as to replenish their own land again, the gospel-Zion, has sometimes had her deserts and waste places: many parts of the church, through either corruption or persecution, made like a wilderness, unfruitful to God, or uncomfortable to the inhabitants; but God will find out a time and way to comfort Zion, not only by speaking comfortably to her, but by acting graciously for her. God has comforted Zion for the waste places of his church, therefore for those parts of it that seem not regarded or valued. (1.) He will make them fruitful, and so give them cause to rejoice; her wildernesses shall put on a new face, and look pleasant as Eden, and abound in all good fruits as the garden of the Lord. Note, It is the greatest comfort of the church to be made serviceable to the glory of God, and to be as his garden in which he delights. (2.) He will make them cheerful, and so give them hearts to rejoice: with the fruits of righteousness, joy and gladness shall be found therein; for, the more desolations he brings, and the more good they do, the more gladness they have. And where there is gladness, to their satisfaction, it is fit that there should be thanksgiving, to God's honour; for, whatever is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving, and the returns of God's favour ought to be celebrated and sung in the voice of melody, which will be the more melodious, when God gives songs in the night, songs in the desert.

4. Hearken unto me, my people, and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people. 5. My righteousness is near: my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people: the isles shall wait upon me, and mine arm shall they trust. 6. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. 7. Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

8. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

Both these proclamations, as I may call them, are alike with an assurance of the perpetuity of God's righteousness, and his salvation; and therefore we put them together, both being designed for the comfort of God's people. Observe, 1. Who they are to whom this comfort belong; "My people, and my nation, that I have set apart for myself, that own me, and are owned by me." Those are God's people and his nation, who are subject to him as their King and their God, pay allegiance to him, and put themselves under his protection accordingly. They are a people who know righteousness, the people who have the law of God in them, written and ruling there. Those God owns for his people, in whose heart his law is. Even those who know righteousness, and have the law of God in their heart, may yet be in great distress and sorrow, and loaded with reproach and contempt: but their God will comfort them with the righteousness they know, and the law they have in their hearts.

II. What the comfort is, that belongs to God's people: 1. That the gospel of Christ shall be preached
and published to the world; A law shall proceed from me, an evangelical law, the law of Christ, the law of faith, ch. ii. 3. This law is his judgment, for it is that law of liberty by which the world shall be governed and judged; this shall not only go forth, but shall continue and rest, it shall take firm footing and deep root in the world; it shall rest not only for the benefit of the Jews, who had the first notice of it, but for a light of the people of other nations. It is a law which God's people, his true children, will receive, and will take it to heart, and be a peril for them; if we shall escape if we neglect it, and turn a deaf ear to it? When a law proceeds from God, he that has ears to hear, let him hear.

2. That this law and judgment shall bring with them righteousness and salvation, shall open a ready way to the children of men, that they may be justified and saved, and given a place in Christ's righteousness and his salvation, because of his contriving and bringing it about; it is a righteousness which he will accept for us, and accept us for; and a righteousness which he will work in us, and graciously accept of; it is the salvation of the Lord, for it arises from him, and terminates in him. Observe, There is no salvation without righteousness; and wherever there is a righteousness in the Gospel, there shall be his salvation. All those, and those only, that are justified and sanctified, shall be glorified.

3. That this righteousness and salvation shall very shortly appear: it is near, it is gone forth; the decree is gone forth concerning it, it shall as certainly be introduced as if it were gone forth already, and be the cause for it to be at hand. It is near in time, behold, all things are now ready; it is near in place, not far to seek, but the word is nigh us, and Christ in the world, righteousness in the word, Rom. x. 8.

4. That this evangelical righteousness and salvation shall not be confined to the Jewish nation, but shall be extended to the Gentiles; Mine arms shall judge the people. Those that will not yield to the judgments of God's mouth, shall be crushed by the judgments of his hand. Some shall thus be judged by the gospel, for for judgment Christ came into this world; but others, and those of the isles, shall wait upon him, and bid his gospel, and the commands as well as the comforts of it, welcome. It was a comfort to God's people, to his nation, that multitudes should be added to them, and the increase of their number should be the increase of their strength and their power. It is added, And on mine arm shall they trust, that arm of the Lord, which is revealed in Christ, ch. iii. 1. Observe, God's arm shall judge the people that are impotent, and yet on his arm shall others trust, and be saved by it; for it is to us, as we make it, a savour of life or of death.

5. That this righteousness and salvation shall be for ever, and shall never be abolished, v. 8. It is an everlasting righteousness that the Messiah brings in, (Dan. ix. 24,) an eternal righteousness that he is the Author of, Heb. v. 9. As it shall spread through all the nations of the earth, so it shall last through all the ages of the world. We must never expect any other way of salvation, any other covenant of peace, or rule of righteousness, than what we have in the gospel, and what we have there shall continue to the end, Matz. xxviii. 20. It is Messiah, for the everlasting state, the eternity; and by this law of liberty men's everlasting state will be determined. This perpetuity of the gospel, and the blessed things it brings in, is illustrated by the fading and perishing of this world and all things in it. Look up to the visible heavens above, which have continued hitherto, and seem likely to continue, but they shall vanish like smoke that soon spreads itself and disappears; they shall be rolled like a scroll, and their lights shall fall like leaves in autumn. Look down to the earth beneath, that abides too for a short ever, (Eccl. i. 14,) but it shall wax old like a garment that will be the worse for wearing; and they that dwell therein, all the inhabitants of the earth, even those that seem to have the best settlement in it, shall die in like manner; the soul shall, as to this world, vanish like smoke, and the body be thrown by like a garment waxen old; they shall be easily crushed, (Job iv. 19,) and tossed among them. But when heaven and earth pass away, when all flesh and the great city, and the heavens, and the earth, shall be consumed, the Lord endures for ever, and not one iota or tittle of that shall fall to the ground. Those who see happiness is bound up in Christ's righteousness and salvation, will have the comfort of it when time and days shall be no more.

III. What use they are to make of this comfort: if God's righteousness and salvation are near to them, then let them not fear the reproaches of men, of mortal, miserable men, nor be afraid of their revilings or spiteful taunts, theirs who bid you sing them the songs of Zion, or who ask you, in scorn, Where is now your God? Let not those who embrace the gospel-righteousness be afraid of those who will call them Beelzebub, and will say all manner of evil against them falsely; let them not be afraid of them, for they are not to be feared. If they speak comely words, or evil words, God's judgments and the word of Christ shall be as a veil, or as a garment which he appears to be; they shall be made weak by the word, and not made uneasy by them, as if they would be the ruin of their reputation and honour, and they must for ever lie under the load of them. Let them not be afraid of their executing their menaces, or be deterred thereby from their duty, or frightened into any sinful compliances, or driven to take any indirect courses for their own safety. Those can bear but little of Christ, that cannot bear a hard word from him. Let us not fear the reproach of men; for, 1. They will be quickly silenced; (v. 8.) The moth shall eat them up like a garment, ch. 1. 9. The worm shall eat them up like wool, or woollen cloth. If we have the approbation of a living God, we may despise the censure of dying men; the matter is not great what they say of us, who must shortly be food for worms. Or it intimates the judgments of God with which they shall be visited, with which they shall be consumed, for their malice against the people of God; they shall be slowly and silently, but effectually, destroyed, when God shall come to reckon with them for all their hard speeches, Jude 14, 15. 2. The cause we suffer for cannot be run down; the falsehood of their reproaches will be detected, but truth shall triumph, and the righteousness of religion's injured cause shall be for ever plain. Clouds darken the sun, but give no obstruction to his progress.

9. Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? 10. Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? 11. Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. 12. I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; 13. And forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth
the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy! and where is the fury of the oppressor? 14. The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. 15. But I am the Lord thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: the Lord of hosts is his name. 16. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.

In these verses, we have,

1. A prayer that God would, in his providence, appear and act for the deliverance of his people, and the mortification of his and their enemies; Awake, awake, put on strength, O Arm of the Lord, v. 1. The Lord, in behalf of Christ and his church, put for God himself, as Ps. lxv. 23. Awake, why sleepest thou? He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; but when we pray that he would awake, we mean that he would make it to appear that he watches over his people, and is always awake to do them good. The arm of the Lord is said to awake, when the power of God exerts itself with more than ordinary influence. God, when he had delivered his people out of Egypt, put forth strength, Exod. 15. l. The power of God is often spoken of as being stretched forth for action, as in Ps. cxlv. 6. God exerts his arm for the salvation of his church. God, the arm of the Lord, will awake to appear in strength, and show forth his power to effect the salvation of his people. In the ancient days, do for us now as thou didst for our fathers formerly, repeat the wonders they told us of; Judg. vi. 13.

II. The pleas to enforce this prayer. 1. They pointed to the experiences of their ancestors, and the great things God had done for them; Let the arm of the Lord be made bare on our behalf, for it has done great things formerly in defence of the same cause, and we are sure it is neither shortened nor weakened; it did wonders against the Egyptians, who enslaved and oppressed God's son, his first-born; it cut Rahab to pieces with one dreadfull plague after another; and wounded Pharaoh, the Dragon, the terror of the nations, Ps. lxxx. 13. It gave him death's wound. It did wonders for Israel; it dried up the sea, even the waters of the great deep, as far as was requisite to open a way through the sea for the ransomed to pass over; v. 10. God is never at a loss for a way to accomplish his purposes concerning his people, but will either find one, or make one. As events, as they are great supports to faith and hope, so they are good pleasers in prayer, Thou hast; wilt thou not? Ps. lxxxv. 1.—6. 2. They plead promises; (v. 11.) And the Redeemer of the Lord shall return; (as it may be supplied) Thou hast said, They shall; referring to ch. xxxii. 10. Where we find this promise, that the Redeemer of the Lord, when they are released out of their captivity in Babylon, shall come with a singing unto Zion. Sinners, when they are brought out of the slavery of sin into the glorious liberty of God's children, may come singing, as a bird got loose out of the cage. The souls of believers, when they are delivered out of the prison of the body, come to the heavenly Zion with singing. This promise will have its full accomplishment, and we may expect it in the mean time; he that designs such joy for us at last, will he not work such deliverance for us in the mean time as our case requires? When the saints come to heaven, they enter into the joy of their Lord, it crowns their heads with immortal honour, it fills their hearts with complete satisfaction; they shall obtain that joy which they have longed for, or obtain in this vale of tears. In this world of changes, it is a short step from joy to sorrow, but in that world sorrow and mourning shall flee away, never to return, or come in view again.

III. The answer immediately given to this prayer; (v. 12.) I, even I, am he that comforteth you. They prayed for the operations of his power, he answers them with the consolations of his grace, which may well be accepted as an equivalent. If God do not wound the dragon, and dry the sea, as formerly, yet if he comfort us in soul under our afflictions, we have no reason to complain. If God do not answer immediately, with the saving strength of his right hand, we must be thankful if he answer us, as an angel was pleased to do, (Zech. 3. 13.) with good words and comforting graces. So he doth, and resolves to comfort his people; I, even I, will do it. He had ordered his ministers to do it, (ch. xl. 1.) but because they cannot reach the heart, he takes the work into his own hands; I, even I, will do it. See how he glories in it; he takes it among the titles of his honour to be the God that comforteth them that be cast down, the delights in being so. Those whom God comforts, are comforted indeed; he, his undertaking to comfort them is comfort enough to them. 1. He comforts those that were in fear; and fear has torment which calls for comfort; the fear of man has a snare in it which we have need of comfort to preserve us from. He comforts the timorous by chiding them, and that is no improper way of comforting either others or ourselves; Who art thou cast down, and why disquieted? v. 12, 13. God, who comforts his people, would not have them disquiet themselves with amazing, perplexing fears, either of the reproach of men, (v. 7.) or of their growing, threatening power and greatness, or of any mischief they may intend against us or our people. Observe, (3.) The absurdity of these fears; it is a disparagement to us to give way to them; Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid? In the original, the pronoun is feminine, Who art thou, O woman, unworthy the name of a man? Such a weak and wanish thing it is to give way to perplexing fears. [1.] It is absurd to be in such dread of a dying man. What! afraid of a man, that shall die, shall certainly and shortly die; of the servant of man which shall be made as vanity, shall rather die, or be cast down, or eaten up? The greatest men, and the most formidable, that are the terror of the mighty, in the land of the living, are but men, Ps. ix. 20.) and shall die like men; (Ps. lxxxii. 7.) but are grass sprung out of the earth, cleaving to it, and returing again into it. Note, We ought to look upon every man as a man that shall die. Those we adore, and love, and trust, are men that shall die; let us not therefore delight too much in them, nor depend too much upon them. Those we fear we must look upon as frail and mortal, and consider what a foolish thing it is for the servants of the living God to be afraid of dying men, that are here to-day, and gone to-morrow. [2.] It is absurd to fear continually every day, (v. 15.) to be ourselves as if we were constantly under the apprehension of a danger too easy, nor to have any enjoyment of ourselves. Now and then a danger may be imminent and threat ning, and it may be prudence to fear it; but to be always
in a toss, jealous of dangers at every step, and to trouble at the shaking of every leaf, is to make our- selves afraid of God. (2.) He brings them to a prison, (v. 13.) and to bring upon ourselves that severe judgment, which is threatened, Deut. xxxvi, 66, 67. Thou shalt fear day and night. [3.] It is absurd to fear beyond what there is cause; "Thou art afraid of the fury of the oppressor; it is true, there is an oppressor, and he is furious, and he designs, it may be, when he has an opportunity, to do thee a mischief, and to bring thee into a pit; but thou art afraid of him, as if he were ready to destroy, as if he were just now going to cut thy throat, and as if there were no possibility of preventing it." A timorous spirit is thus apt to make the worst of every thing, and to apprehend the danger greater and nearer than really it is. Sometimes God is pleased at once to show the folly of it; "Where is the fury of the oppressor? It is gone in an instant, and the danger is over ere thy art aware." His heart is turned, or his hands are tied. Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise, and the king of Babylon no more. What is gone with all the furious oppressors of God's Israel, that he has destroyed and threatened them, and were a terror to them; they passed away, and lo, they were not, and no more were heard of them. (2.) The impotency of these fears; "Thou art afraid of a man that shall die, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, who is also the Maker of all the world, who has stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth, and therefore has all the hosts and all the powers of both at his command and disposal." Note. Our inordinate fearing of man is an implicit forgetting of God. When we disquiet ourselves with the fear of man, we forget that there is a God above him, and that the greatest of men have no power but what is given them from above; we forget the providence of God, by which he orders and overrules all events according to the counsel of his own will; we forget the promises he has made to protect his people, and the experiences we have had of his care concerning us, and his seasonable inter-position for our relief many a time, when we thought the oppressor ready to destroy; we forget our Jehovah-jireh, monuments of mercy in the mount of the Lord. Did we remember to make God our fear and our dread, we should not be so much afraid as we are of the frowns of men, ch. viii. 13, 15. Happy is the man that fears God always, Prov. xxix. 14, 15. 2. He comforts those that were in bonds, v. 14, 15. See here, (1.) What they do for themselves; The captive exile hastens that he may be loosed, and may return to his own country, from which he is banished; his care is, that he may not die in the pit, not die a prisoner, through the inconveniences of his confinement; and that his bread should not fail, either the bread he should have to keep him alive in prison, or that which should bear his charges home; his stock is low, and therefore he hastens to be loosed. Now some understand this as his fault; he is distrustfully impatient of delays, cannot wait God's time, but thinks he is undone, and must die in the pit, if he be not released immediately; others take it to be his praise, that when the doors are shut, and the bread is cut off, he is not with the bread he should have to keep him alive in prison, with all diligence to procure his discharge; and then it follows, But I am the Lord thy God, which inti- mates, (2.) What God will do for them, even that which they cannot do for themselves. God has all power in his hand to help the captive exiles; for he has divided the sea, when the roaring of its waves was more frightful than any of the importunate waifs of cruel oppressors. He has stilled or quenched the sea, so some think it should be read, Ps. lxv. 7.—lxxxix. 9. This is not only a proof of what God can do, but a resemblance of what he has done, and will do, for his people; he will find out a way to still the terror of their oppressor, and bring them to harbour: The Lord of hosts is his name, his name for ever; the name by which his people have long known him. And as he is able to help them, so he is willing and engaged to do it; for he is thy God, o captive exile, thou in covenant. This is a check to the despoothing captives; let them not conclude that they must either be lost immediately, or die in the pit; for he that is the Lord of hosts can relieve them when they are brought over so low. It is also an encouragement to the diligent captives, who, when liberty is proclaimed, are willing to lose no time; let them know that the Lord is their God, and while they thus strive to help themselves, they may be sure he will help them. He comforts all his people who depended upon what the prophets said to them in the name of the Lord, and built their hopes upon it. When the deliverances which the prophets spoke of, either did not come so soon as they looked for them, or did not come up to the height of their expectation, they began to cast down in their own eyes; but as to this, they are encouraged, (v. 16.) by what God says to his people, not by the prophets, nor to this, or them, principally, but to Christ, the great Prophet. It is a great satisfaction to those to whom the message is sent, to hear the God of truth and power say to his messenger, as he does here, I have put my words in thy mouth, that by them I may plant the heavens. God undertook to comfort his people; (v. 12.) but still he does it by his prophets, by his gospels, and by these, he here tells us, (1.) That his word in them is very true. He owns what they had said to be what he had directed and enjoined them to say; I have put my words in thy mouth, and therefore he that receives them and them receives me. This is a great stay to our faith, that Christ's doctrine was not his, but that he sent him; and that the words of the prophets and apostles were God's words which he put into their mouths. God's Spirit not only revealed to them the things themselves they spoke of, but dictated to them the words they should speak, (2 Pet. i. 21, 1 Cor. ii. 13.) so that these are the true sayings of God, of a God that cannot lie. (2.) That it is very safe; I have covered thee in the shadow of my hand; (as before, ch. xlix. 2.) which speaks the special protection no other prophet is said to have been by God, but this holy man of God, chaps. 40-52, is by God specially protected, not only of Christ, but of Christianity, of the gospel of Christ; it is not only the faithful word of God which the prophets deliver to us, but it shall be carefully preserved till it have its accomplishment for the use of the church, notwithstanding the restless endeavours of the powers of darkness to extinguish this light. They shall prophesy again; (Rev. x. 11.) though not in their persons, yet in their writings, which God has always the care of; the greater the tumult of the earth, may do that for my people which will be a new creation. This must look as far forward as to the great work done by the gospel of Christ, and the setting up of his holy religion in the world. As God by Christ made the world at first, (Hch. i. 2.) and by him formed the Old Testament church, (Zech. vii. 8, 9.) so when he makes the world to do this mouth, he will set up, (1.) A new world; we again plant the heavens, and found the earth. Sin having put the whole creation into disorder, Christ's
taking away the sin of the world put all into order again; old things are passed away, all things are become new; things in heaven and things on earth are reconciled, and so put into a new posture, Col. 1. 20. Through him, according to the promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, (2 Pet. iii. 13.) and to this the prophets bear witness. [2.] He will set up a new church, a New Testament church; he will say unto Zion, Thou art my people. The gospel-church is called Zion, (Heb. xii. 22.) and Jerusalem, Gal. iv. 26. And when the Gentiles are brought into it, shall be said unto them, Ye are my people. When God works great deliverances for his church, and especially when he shall complete the salvation of it in the great day, he will thereby own that poor despised hand, full to be his people, whom he has chosen and loved.

17. Awake, awake, stand up, 0 Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury: thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out. 18. There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand, of all the sons that she hath brought up. 19. These two things are come unto thee; who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee? 20. Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets as a wild bull in a net: they are full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of thy God. 21. Therefore, hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine: 22. Thus saith thy Lord, the Lord, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thy hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury, thou shalt no more drink it again: 23. But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over; and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.

God having awaked for the comfort of his people, here calls upon them to awake, as afterward, ch. lii. 1. It is a call to awake not so much out of their sleep of sin, (though that also is necessary in order to their being ready for deliverance,) as out of the stupor of despair. When the inhabitants of Jerusalem were in captivity, they as well as those who remained upon the spot, were so overwhelmed with the sense of their troubles, that they had no heart or spirit to mind anything that tended to their comfort or relief; they were as the disciples in the garden, sleeping for sorrow, (Luke xxii. 45.) and therefore when the deliverance came, they are said to be like them that dream, (Ps. cxxvi. 1.) Nay, it is a call to awake, not only from sleep, but from death, like that to the dry bones to life, Ezek. xxxvii. 9. “Awake, and look about thee, that thou mayest see the day of the deliverance down, and mayest he ready to bid it welcome; recover thy senses, sink not under thy load, but stand up, and hasten thyself for thy own help." This may be applied to the Jerusalem that was in the apostle's time, which is said to be in bondage with her children, (Gal. iv. 25.) and to have been under the power of a spirit of slumber; (Rom. xi. 8.) they are called to awake, and mind the things that belonged to their everlasting peace, and then the cup of trembling should be taken out of their hands, plate should be spoken to them, and they should triumph over Satan, who had blinded their eyes and lulled them asleep. Now,

1. It is owned that Jerusalem had long been in a very deplorable condition, and sunk into the depths of misery.

2. Those that should have helped her in her distress, failed her, and were either unable or unwilling to help her, as might have been expected, ver. 18. She is intoxicated with the cup of God's fury, and, being so, staggerers, and is very unsteady in her counsels and attempts; she knows not what she says or does; much less knows she what is best to do in this unhappy condition, of all the sons that she has brought forth and brought up, that she has borne and educated, (and were there many famous ones, for of Zion it was said, That this and that man was born there, Ps. lxxxvii. 5.) there is none to guide her, none to take her by the hand, to keep her either from falling, or from shameing herself, to lend either a help to help her out of her trouble, or a hand to comfort her under it. Think it not strange, if wise and good men are disappointed in their children, and have not that succour from them which they expected, but if those that were arrows in their hand, prove arrows in their heart, when Jerusalem herself has none of all her sons, either prince, priest, or prophet, that has such a sense either of duty or gratitude, as to help her when she had most need of help. Thus they complain, (Ps. lxxix. 9.) There is none to tell us how long.

Now that which aggravated this disappointment, was, (1.) That her trouble was very great, and yet there was none to pity or help her; These two things are come unto thee, (ver. 19.) to complete thy desolation and destruction, ye have been made a reproach, a proverb, a jest, and a byword, two sore judgments, and very terrible. Or, the two things were, the desolation and destruction by which the city was wasted, and the famine and sword by which the citizens perished. Or, the two things were, the trouble itself, made up of desolation, destruction, famine, and sword, and her being helpless, forlorn, and comfortless, with it. Two such things indeed are to be in this vile case, and she have none to pity thee, to sympathize with thee in thy griefs, or to help to bear the burden of thy care; to have none to comfort thee, by suggesting that to thee which might help to alleviate thy grief, or doing that for thee which might help to redress thy grievances." Or, these two things that were
come upon Jerusalem, are the same with the two things that were afterward to come upon Babylon, (ch. xlvi. 9.) loss of children and widowhood; piteous cases, and yet, when thou hast brought it upon thyself by thy own sin and folly, who shall be sorry for thee? Cases that call for comfort, and yet, when thou art forward under thy trouble, frettest, and maketh thyself uneasy, by whom shall I comfort thee? They that will not be counselled, cannot be helped.

(2.) That those who should have been her comforters, were their own tormentors, (v. 20.) They bare them up, as quietly as they could, to avoid any spirit, they have patience in which to keep possession of their own souls, and the enjoyment of themselves, nor any confidence in God's promise, by which to keep possession of the comfort of that. They throw themselves upon the ground, in vexation at their troubles, and there they lie at the head of all the streets, complaining to all that pass by, (Lam. i. 12.) pining away for want of necessary food; there they lie like a wild bull in a net, fretting and raging, struggling and pulling, to help themselves, but entangling themselves so much the more, and making their condition the worse, by their own passions and discontents. They that are of a meek and quiet spirit, are, under affliction, like a dove in a net, mourning indeed, but silent and patient. They do not argue the matter with God, but it is only a wild bull in a net, unexcuseable to themselves, vexations to their friends, and provoking to their God: they are full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of our God. God is angry with them, and contends with them, and they are full of that only, and take no notice of his wise and gracious dispositions in afflicting them, never inquire wherefore he contends with them, or how they may be reconciled to him, and be delivered from the danger at God, and quarrelling with them. They are displeased at God for the dispensations of his providence concerning them, and so they do but make bad worse. This had long been Jerusalem's woful case, and God took cognizance of it. But,

II. It is promised that Jerusalem's troubles shall at length come to an end, and be transferred to her persecutors; (v. 21.) Nevertheless, hear this, thou afflicted. It is often the lot of God's church to be afflicted, and God has always something to say to her then, which she will do well to hearken to. "Thou art drunken, not as formerly with wine, not with the intoxicating cup of Babylon's whereabouts and idolatries, but with the cup of affliction. Know, that the Lord Jehovah is thy Lord and thy God, for all this." It is expressed emphatically, (v. 22.) "Thus saith thy Lord, the Lord, and thy God; the Lord, who is able to help thee, and has wherewithal to relieve thee, thy Lord, who has an uncontestable right to thee, and will not alienate it, thy God, in covenant with thee, and who has undertaking to all thy joy, and undertaking to all thy happiness. If the distresses of God's people may be, he will not desert his relation to them, nor have they lost their interest in him and in his promise.

3. That he should shortly take leave of their troubles, and bid a final farewell to them; "I will take out of thy hand the cup of trembling, that bitter cup, it shall pass from thee." This wing of the cup of trembling will not be, nor saying, "We will not drink it," but if they humbly and penitently submit, he that put it into our hands will himself take it out of our hands. Nay, it is promised, "Thou shalt no more drink it again; God has at last his controversy with thee, and will not revive the judgment." 4. That their persecutors and oppressors should be made to drink, and be so drunk, that while which they had drunk so deep, (v. 23.) See here, (1.) How insensibly they had abused, and trampled upon, the people of God; They have said to thy soul, to thee, to thy life, Bow down, that we may go over. Nay, they have said it to the conscience, taking pride and pleasure in forcing thee to worship idols. He ran the New Testament Babylon through the steps of that old oppressor, tyrannizing over men's consciences, giving law to them, putting them upon the rack, and compelling them to sinful compliances. They that set up an infallible head and judge, requiring an implicit faith in his dictates, and obedience to his commands, do in effect say to men's souls, Bow down, that we may go over, and they say it with delight. How meanly the people of God (having no head or judge at all) is he now driven, and under every kind of vexation and persecution. They cannot be forced, nor is it mentioned to their praise that they yielded thus far. But, (2.) Observe how justly will God reckon with those who have carried it so imperiously toward his people; the cup of trembling shall be put into their hand. Babylon's case shall be as bad as ever Jerusalem's was. Daniel's persecutors shall be thrown into Daniel's den; let them see how they like it. And the Lord is known by these judgments which he executes.

CHAP. LIII.

The most part of this chapter is of the same subject with the chapter before, concerning the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, which yet is applicable to the great salvation of all God's redeemed. The three last verses are of the same subject with the following chapter, concerning the person of the Redeemer, his humiliation, and exaltation. Observe, I. The encouragement that is given to the Jews in captivity, to hope that God would deliver them in his own way and time, ver. 1-6. II. The great joy and rejoicing that shall be both with ministers and people upon that occasion, ver. 7-10. III. How all the sins and sins of Babylon shall be put into captivity to shift for their own enlargement when liberty was proclaimed, ver. 11, 12. IV. A short idea given here of the Messiah, which is enlarged upon in the next chapter, ver. 13, 15.

1. A WAKE, awake; put on thy strength. O Zion; put on thy beautiful garnments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. 2. Shake thyself from the dust, arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. 3. For thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money. 4. For thus said.
ISAIAH, LII.

Jerusalem must then put on her beautiful garments when she is become a holy city, for the beauty of holiness is the most amiable beauty, and the mere holy we are, the mere cause we have to rejoice.

(2.) Let them make gardens, and plant every man a vineyard; and they shall eat the decrease of it.

The Lord must have it, and the kings of the earth shall worship God in Jerusalem, and in the Gentiles shall be the name of the Lord, and their praise, and their name, and the name of the children of Israel shall be known in the Gentiles, as the Lord hath said, "These shall be my people, and they shall be my people; the Lord be their God." Thus in the end the Lord is come again to save his people, to deliver them from the hands of the enemy; to destroy the Egyptians, and make known his name on earth. In this peace they shall sit every man under his vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make them afraid. They shall not again pass through the redemption of the Lord. They shall have no sorrow, neither shall any grief man.

The Lord is the God of all the earth.

1. God's people are stirred up to appear vigorous for their own deliverance. v. 1. They had desired that God would awake, and put on his strength, ch. ii. 9. Here he calls upon them to awake, and put on their strength, to bestir themselves; let them awake from their despondency, and pluck up their spirits, encourage themselves and one another with hope that all will be well yet, and no longer succumb and sink under their burden. Let them awake from their distrust, look above them, look about them, look into the promises, look into the providences of God that were working for them, and let their hope have its expectations of great things from God. Let them awake from their dulness, sluggishness, and incoetiy, and raise up their endeavours, not to take any irregular courses for their own relief, contrary to the law of nations concerning captives, but to use all likely means to recommend themselves to the favour of the conqueror, and make an interest with him.

2. God here gives them an assurance. That they shall be reformed by their captivity; There shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean, their idolatrous customs shall be no more introduced, or at least not harboured; for when by the marriage of strange wives, in Ezra's time and Nehemiah's, the unclean cruet in, they were soon by the vigilance and zeal of the magistrates expelled again and again; and care was taken that Jerusalem should be a holy city. Thus the gospel-Jerusalem is purified by the blood of Christ and the grace of God, and made indeed a holy city.

2. They shall be relieved, and rescued out of their captivity; that the bands of their necks should be loosed; that they should not now be any longer oppressed, nay, that they should not be any more invaded as they had been; There shall be no more heavy-laden, or Macedonian, or Byzantine. v. 1. The uncircumcised and the unclean. The heathen shall not again enter into God's sanctuary, and profane his temple, Ps. Lxxix. 1. This must be understood with a condition; if they keep close to God, and keep in with him, God will keep off, will keep out, the enemy; but if they again corrupt themselves, Antichus will profane their temple, and the Romans destroy it. However, for some time yet they shall have the heathen upon their heads. And to this happy change, now approaching, they are here called to accommodate themselves. (1.) Let them prepare for joy; Put on thy beautiful garments, no longer to appear in mourning-weeds, and the habit of thy widowhood. Put on a new face, a smiling countenance, now that a new and pleasant scene begins to open. The beautiful garments were laid up then, when the prophet spoke of them, (v. 1.) but now there is occasion for both, let both be resumed together.

Put on thy strength, and in order to that, put on thy beautiful garments, in token of triumph and rejoicing. Note, The joy of the Lord will be our strength, (Neh. vii. 10,) and our beautiful garments will serve for armour of proof against the darts of temptation and trouble. And observe,
were done to his people; (v. 5.) What have I here, what do I get by it, that my people is taken away for naught? God is not worshipped as he used to be in Jerusalem, his altar there is gone, and his temple in ruins; but if, in lieu of that, he were more and better worshipped in Babylon, either by the captives, or by the natives, it were another matter, God might be looked upon as in some respect a Gānîr in his honour by it; but alas, it is not so. (1.) The captives are so dispirited, that they cannot praise him; instead of this, they are continually howling, which grieves him, and moves his pity. They that rule over them make them to howl, as the Egyptians of old made them to sigh, Exod. vi. 23. So the Babylonians, now using them more hardly, extorted from them louder complaints, and made them to howl. This gives us no pleasing idea of the temper the captives were now in; their complaints were not so rational and pious as they should have been, but brutish rather; they howled, Hos. vii. 14. However, God heard it, and came down to deliver them, as he did out of Egypt, Exod. iii. 7, 8. (2.) The natives are so insolent, that they will not praise him, but, instead of that, they are continually blaspheming, which affronts him, and moves his anger. They boasted that they were too hard for God, because they were too hard for his people, and set him not to be a Father to them, and that his name continually every day was blasphemed among them. When they praised their own idols, they lifted up themselves against the Lord of heaven, Dan. v. 23. “Now,” says God, “this is not to be suffered, I will go down to deliver them; for what honour, what rent, what tribute of praise, have I from the world, when my people, who should have done to me a nation, to do praise, are turned to a reproach? For their oppressors will neither praise God themselves, nor let them do it.” The apostle quotes this, with application to the wicked lives of the Jews, by which God was dishonoured among the Gentiles then, as much as now he was by their sufferings, Rom. ii. 23, 24.

4. That his glory would be greatly manifested by their deliverance; (v. 6.) “Therefore, because my name is thus blasphemed, I will arise, and my people shall know my name, my name, Jehovah.” By this name he had made himself known, in delivering them out of Egypt, Exod. vi. 3. God will do something to vindicate his own honour, something for his great name, and his people, who have almost lost the knowledge of it, shall know it to their comfort, and shall salute the grace of God, and shall know that God’s providence governs the world, and all the affairs of it, that it is he who speaks deliverance for them by the word of his power, that it is he only, who at first spake, and it was done. They shall know that God’s word, which Israel is blessed with above other nations, shall without fail have its accomplishments in the season; that it is he who speaks by the prophets, it is he, and they do not speak of themselves, for not one iota or tittle of what they say shall fall to the ground.

7. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! 8. Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. 9. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem: 10. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. 11. Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from hence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; he ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. 12. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rearward. The removal of the Jews from Babylon to their own land again, is here spoken of both as a mercy, and as a duty; and the application of v. 7. to the preaching of the gospel, (by the apostle, Rom. x. 15.) plainly intimates that what that deliverance was a type and figure of the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ, to which what is here said of their redemption out of Babylon ought to be accommodated. 1. It is here spoken of as a great blessing, which ought to be welcomed with abundance of joy and thankfulness. 2. Those that bring the tidings of their release, shall be very acceptable; (v. 7.) “How beautiful upon the mountains, the mountains round about Jerusalem, over which these messengers are seen coming at a distance, how beautiful are their feet, when it is known what tidings they bring!” It is not meant so much of the common pests, or the messengers sent express by the government to disperse the proclamation, but rather of some of the Jews themselves, who being the fountain-head of intelligence, had early notice of it, and immediately went themselves, or sent their own messengers, to all parts, to disperse the news, and even to Jerusalem itself, to tell the few who remained there, that their brethren would be with them shortly, for it is published not merely as matter of news, but as proof that Zion’s God reigns, for in that language it is published; they say unto Zion, Thy God reigns. Those who bring the tidings of peace and salvation, that Cyrus has given orders for the release of the Jews, tidings which were so long expected by them that waited for the consolation of Israel, those good tidings, (so the original reads it, without the tautology of our translation, good tidings of good,) they put this construction upon it, O Zion, thy God reigns. Some seem to have been more sensible of the good news, and when good news is abroad, this is the best news, that Zion’s God reigns; that God is Zion’s God in covenant with her, and as such he reigns, Ps. cxlv. 10. Zech. ix. 9. The Lord has founded Zion, ch. xiv. 32. All events have their rise in the disposals of the kingdom of his providence, and their tendency to the advancement of himself, and his kingdom. This must be applied to the preaching of the gospel, which is a proclamation of peace and salvation; it is gospel indeed, good news, glad tidings, tidings of victory over our spiritual enemies, and liberty from our spiritual bondage. The good news is, that the Lord Jesus reigns, and all power is given to him. Christ himself brought these tidings first; (Luke iv. 18. Heb. ii. 3.) and the apostle speaks to the text in which he are feet; his feet that were nailed to the cross, how beautiful upon mount Calvary; his feet when he came leaping upon the mountains, Cant. ii. 8. How beautiful were they to these who knew his voice, and knew it to be the voice of their Beloved. His ministers proclaim these good tidings; they ought to keep their feet clean from the pollutions of the world, and then they ought to be beautiful in the eyes of those to whom they are sent, whose
Jerusalem must then put on her beautiful garments when she is become a holy city, for the beauty of holiness is the most amiable beauty, and the more among the cities, we are pleased with upon the
(2.) Let them prepare for liberty; "Shake thyself from the dust in which thou hast lain, and into which thy proud oppressors have trodden thee, (ch. lii. 23) or into which thou hast in thy extreme sorrow rolled thyself;" Arise, and sit up; so it may be read. "O Jerusalem, prepare to get clear of all the marks of servitude thou hast been under, and to fly in thy quarters; lose thyself from the bands of thy neck, be loaded with generous presents, and resolutions to assert thine own liberty;" The gospel proclaims liberty to those who were bound with fears, and makes it their duty to take hold of their liberty. Let those who have been weary and heavy-laden, under the burden of sin, finding relief in Christ, shake themselves from the dust of their doubts and fears, and loose themselves from those bands; for if the Son make them free, they shall be free indeed.

11. God stirs up himself to appear jealous for the deliverance of his people. He here pleads their cause with himself, and even stirs up himself to come and save them, for his reasons of mercy are fetched from himself. Divers things he here considers,

(1.) That the Chaldeans who oppressed them, never acknowledged God in the power they gained over their people; any more than Seman. herib did, who, when God made use of him as an instrument for the correction and reformation of his people, meant not so, c. 6. 7. "Ye have sold yourselves for naught, you got nothing by it, nor did I;" v. 3. God considers that when they by sin had harboured; they, and thereby themselves, he himself, who had the prefer- nay, the sole, title to them, did not increase his wealth by the price, Ps. xlv. 12. (They did not so much as pay their debts to him with it; the Babylonians gave him no thanks for them, but rather reproached and blasphemed his name upon that account.) "And therefore they, having so long had you for nothing, shall at last restore you for nothing; you shall be redeemed without price;" this was his promise, ch. xlv. 13. Those that give nothing, must expect to get nothing; however, God is a Deutor to no man.

2. That they had been often before in the like distress, had often smarted for a time under the tyranny of their task-masters, and therefore it was pity that they should now be left always in the hand of these oppressors; (c. 4.) and this, carried into Egypt, in an amiable way to settle there; but they enslaved them, and ruled them with rigour. And then they were delivered, notwithstanding the pride, power, and policies of Pharaoh. And why may we not think God will deliver his people now? At other times, the Assyrian oppressed the people of God without cause, as when the ten tribes were carried away captive before the Chaldeans; but now, another Assyrian, with a destroying army, oppressed, and made himself master of, all the defended cities of Judah; the Babylonians might not unrightly be called Assyrians, their monarchy being a branch of the Assyrian; and they now oppressed them without cause. Though God was righteous in delivering them into their hands, they were unrighteous in using them. They did not pretend a dominion over them as their subjects, as Pharaoh might when they were settled in Goshen, a part of his kingdom. When we suffer by the hands of wicked and unreasonable men, it is some comfort to be able to say, that as to them it is without cause, that we have not given them any provocation, Ps. vii. 3, 5, &c.

3. That God's glory suffered by the injuries that
were done to his people; (v. 5.) What have I here, what do I get by it, that my people is taken away for naught? God is not worshipped as he used to be in Jerusalem, his altar there is gone, and his temple in ruins; but if, in lieu of that, he were more and better worshipped in Babylon, either by the captives, or by the natives, it were another matter, God might be looked upon as in some respect a Gainer in his honour by it; but alas, it is not so. 

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1. It is here spoken of as a great blessing, which ought to be welcomed with abundance of joy and thankfulness.

2. Those that bring the tidings of their release, shall be as acceptable: (v. 7.) “How beautiful upon the mountains, the mountains round about Jerusalem, over which these messengers are seen coming at a distance, how beautiful are their feet, when it is known what tidings they bring!” It is not meant so much of the common pests, or the messengers sent express by the government to disperse the proclamation, but rather of some of the Jews themselves, who, being at the fountain-head of intelligence, had early notice of it, and immediately went themselves, or sent their own messengers, to all parts, to disperse the news, and even to Jerusalem itself, to tell the few who remained there, that their brethren would be with them shortly, for it is published not merely as matter of news, but as a proof that Zion’s God reigns, for in that language it is published; they say unto Zion, Thy God reigns.

Those who bring the tidings of peace and salvation, that Cyrus has given orders for the release of the Jews, tidings which were so long expected by them that waited for the consolation of Israel, those good tidings, (so the original reads it, without the tautology of our translation, good tidings of good,) they put this construction upon it, O Zion, thy God is thy king, and shall reign in thy midst; and when good news is abroad, the best news, that Zion’s God reigns; that God is Zion’s God in covenant with her, and as such he reigns, Ps. cxxxvi. 10. Zec. ix. 9. The Lord has founded Zion, ch. xiv. 32. All events have their rise in the dispositions of the kingdom of his providence, and their tendency to the advancement of the kingdom of his grace. This must be applied to the preaching of the gospel, which is a proclamation of peace and salvation; it is gospel indeed, good news, glad tidings, tidings of victory over our spiritual enemies, and liberty from our spiritual bondage. The good news is, that the Lord Jesus reigns, and all power is given to him. Christ himself brought these tidings first; (Luke ix. 18. Heb. ii. 5.) and hence that true text is, “How beautiful are his feet; his feet that were nailed to the cross, how beautiful upon mount Calvary; his feet when he came leaping upon the mountains,” Cant. ii. 8.

How beautiful were they to those who knew his voice, and knew it to be the voice of their Beloved. His ministers proclaim these good tidings; they ought to keep their feet clean from the pollutions of the world, and then they ought to be beautiful in the eyes of those to whom they are sent, who sit
at their feet, or rather at Christ's in them, to hear his word. They must be esteemed in love, for their work's sake, 1 Thess. v. 13. For their message-sake, which is well worthy of all acceptance.

2. Those to whom the tidings are brought, shall be put thereby into a transport of joy.

(1.) Zion's watchmen shall then rejoice, because they shall see eye to eye; and also shall they all see the Lord face to face.

3. The watchmen on Jerusalem's walls shall lead the chorus in this triumph; who they were we are told, ch. lix. 6. They were such as God set on the walls of Jerusalem, to make mention of his name, and to continue instant in prayer to him, till he again make Jerusalem a joyful earth; these watchmen stand upon their watch-tower, waiting for an answer to their repeated cry to God, and are soon surprised with good news, for they have it first, and the longer they have continued, and the more importantly they have been in praying for it, the more will they be elevated when it comes; they shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing in concert, to invite others to join with them in their praises. And that which above all things will transport them with pleasure is, that they shall see eye to eye; for they shall see a God hiding himself, and they could scarcely discern any thing of his favour through the dark cloud of their afflictions, now that the cloud is scattered they shall plainly see it. They shall see Zion's king eye to eye; so it was fulfilled when the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and there were those that saw his glory, (John i. 14,) and they have a firm agreement and correspondence between the prophecy and the event, the promise and the performance; they shall see how they look one upon another eye to eye, and be satisfied that the same God spake the one, and the other. When the Lord shall bring again Zion out of her captivity, the prophets shall thence receive and give fuller discoveries than ever of God's good-will to his people. Applying this also, as the foregoing verse, to gospel-times, it is a promise of the pourings out of the Spirit upon gospel ministers, as a spirit of wisdom and revelation, to lead them into all truth, so that they shall see eye to eye; shall see God's grace more clearly than the Old Testament saints should see it; and they shall herein be on an ''unequaled in these great things concerning the common salvation, they shall concur in and enjoy all they had and the same God, and be as Paul seems to allude to this, when he makes it the privilege of our future state, that we shall see face to face.

(2.) Zion's waste places shall then rejoice, because they shall be surprisingly comforted; (v. 9.) Break forth into joy, sing together; ye waste places of Jerusalem; that is, all parts of Jerusalem, for it was all in ruins, and even those parts that seemed to lie most desolate, shall share in the joy; and they, having little expected it, shall break forth into joy, as men that dream, Ps. cxxi. 1, 2. Let them sing together. Note, Those that share in mercies, ought to join in praises. Here is matter for joy and praise.

[1.] God's people will have the comfort of this salvation, and what is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be as surprising as the taking up. He has redeemed Jerusalem, the iniquity of Jerusalem, that were sold into the hands of their enemies, and thereby he has comforted his people that were in sorrow. The redemption of Jerusalem is the joy of all God's people, whose character it is, that they look for that redemption, Luke ii. 38. [2.] God will have the glory of it, v. 16. He has made bare his holy arm, manifested and displayed his power, in the eyes of all the nations. God's arm is a holy arm, stretched out in purity and justice, in defence of holiness, and in pursuance of his promise. [3.] All the world will have the benefit of it; the great salvation wrought out by our Lord Jesus, the arm of the Lord was revealed, and all the exult of the earth were made to see the great salvation, not as spectators of it only, as they saw the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, but as sharers in it; some of all nations, the most remote, shall partake of the benefit of the redemption. This is applied to our salvation in Rom. x. 14-17. (Lk. i. 69.) It shall see the salvation of God, that great salvation.

II. It is here spoken of as a great business, which ought to be managed with abundance of care and circumspection. When the liberty is proclaimed,

1. Let the people of God hasten out of Babylon with all convenient speed; though they are ever so well settled there, let them not think of taking root there; they are bereaved of the liberty which Christ has proclaimed to them. And if the Son make them free, they shall be free indeed.

2. Let them take heed of carrying away with them any of the pollutions of Babylon; Touch no unclean thing. Now that God makes bare his holy arm for you, be ye holy as he is, and keep yourselves from every unclean thing. With the came out of Egypt, they brought with them the idolatrous customs of Egypt, (Ezek. xxiii. 3,) which were their ruin; let them take heed of doing so, now that they come out of Babylon. Note, When we are receiving any special mercy from God, we ought more carefully than ever to watch against all impurity. But especially let them be clean, who bear the vessels of the Lord, the priests, when they change the vessels of the sanctuary, (when they were restored by a particular grant,) to carry them to Jerusalem, Ezra i. 7.—viii. 24, 25. Let them not only avoid touching any unclean thing, but be very careful to cleanse themselves according to the purification of the sanctuary. Christians are made to bear God's spiritual priests, Rev. i. 6. They are to bear the vessels of the Lord, are intrusted to keep the ordinances of God pure and entire; let good thing be committed to them, and they ought to be clean, to wash their hands in innocency, and so to compass God's altar, and, to carry his vessels, and keep themselves pure.

3. Let them depend upon the presence of God with them, and his protection in their remove; (v. 12.) Ye shall not go out with haste. They were to go with a light and cheerful hand, not to lose time, nor linger long; for the Lord will go before them as their General and Commander-in-chief. And the God of Israel will be their Rearward, or, he that will gather up them that are left behind. God will both lead their van, and bring up their rear; he will secure them from enemies that either meet them or follow them, with his favour he will compass them. Let them not be afraid, if the clouds and fire, when they came out of Egypt, sometimes went behind them to secure their rear. Exod. xiv. 19. And God's presence with them
would now be that to them which that pillar was a visible token of. These that are in the way of their duty, are under God's special protection; and he that believes this, will not make haste.

13. Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and exalted, and be very high. 14. As many were astonished at thee; (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men;) 15. So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

Here, as in other places, for the confirming of the faith of God's people, and the encouraging of their hope in the promise of temporal deliverances, the prophet passes from them, to speak of the great salvation which should in the fullness of time be wrought out by the Messiah. As the prophecy of Christ's incarnation was intended for the ratification of the promise of their deliverance from the Assyrian army, so this of Christ's death and resurrection is to confirm the promise of their return out of Babylon: for both these salvations were typical of the great redemption, and the prophecies of them had a reference to this, which the prophet here, is continued to the end of the next chapter, points as plainly as can be at Jesus Christ; the ancient Jews understood it of the Messiah, though the modern Jews take a great deal of pains to pervert it; and some of ours (no friends therein to the Christian religion) will have it understood of Jeremiah; but Philip, who from hence preached Christ to the eunuch, had a more just dispute, that he was speaking of the prophet of himself, of him, and of no other man, Acts viii. 29, 35. 34. 35. Here.

I. God owns Christ to be both commissioned and qualified for his undertaking. 1. He is appointed to it: "He is my Servant, whom I employ, and therefore will uphold." In his undertaking, he does his Father's will, seeks his Father's honour, and serves his Father's cause. 2. He is qualified for it: He shall deal prudently, for the spirit of wisdom and understanding shall rest upon him, ch. xi. 2. The word is used concerning David when he behaved himself wisely, 1 Sam. xvii. 14. Christ is Wisdom itself, and in the contriving and carrying on of the work of our redemption, there appeared much of the wisdom of God in a mystery, 1 Cor. ii. 7. Christ, when he was here upon earth, dealt very prudently, to the admiration of all.

II. He gives a short prospect both of his humiliation, and his exaltation. See here,

1. How he humbled himself; Many were astonished at him, as they were at David, when by reason of his sorrows and troubles he became a wonder unto many, Ps. lix. 7. Many were wondred to see what base use was made of, with how invertebrate people were against him, how inhuman, and what indignities were done him; His visage was marred more than any man's, when he was buffeted, smitten on the cheek, and crowned with thorns, and hid not his face from shame and spitting. His face was foul with weeping, for he was a Man of sorrows; he that really was fairer than the children of men, had his face spoiled with the abuses that were done him. Never was man used so barbarously; his form, when he took upon him the form of a servant, was more mean and abject than that of any of the sons of men. They that saw him, said, Surely never man looked so miserably, a worm, and no man," Ps. xiii. 6. The nation abhorred him, (ch. xix. 7.) treated him as the offscouring of all things. Never was sorrow like unto his sorrow.

2. How highly God exalted him, and therefore exalted him, because he humbled himself. Three words are used here: 1. He shall be exalted, and exalted, and be very high. God shall exalt him, men shall exalt him, and with both he shall be very high, higher than the highest, higher than the heavens. He shall prosper in his work, and succeed in it, and that shall raise him very high. (1.) Many nations shall be the better for him, for he shall sprinkle them, and not the Jews only, the blood of sprinkling shall be applied to their conversion, and purified. He suffered and died, and so sprinkled many nations, for in his death there was a fountain opened, Zech. xiii. 1. He shall sprinkle many nations by his heavenly doctrine, which shall drop as the rain, and distil as the dew. Moses's did so only on one nation, (Deut. xxxiii. 2.) but Christ's on many nations. He shall do it by baptism, which is the washing of the body with pure water, Heb. x. 22. So that this promise had its accomplishment when Christ sent his apostles to disciple all nations, by baptizing or sprinkling them. (2.) The great ends of the nations shall show him respect; Kings shall shut their mouths at him, they shall not open their mouths against him, as they have done, to contradict and blaspheme his sacred oracles; nay, they shall acquire in him, and by him, the methods he takes of setting up his kingdom in the world; they shall with great humility and reverence receive his oracles and laws, as those who, when they heard Job's wisdom, after his speech spake not again, Job xxxii. 9, 22. Kings shall see and arise, ch. xiii. 7. (3.) The mystery which was kept secret from the beginning of the world, shall by him be made known. He shall be the centre of the obedience of faith, as the apostle speaks, Rom. xvi. 25, 26. That which has not been told them shall they see; the gospel brings to light things now and unheard of, which will waken the attention, and engage the reverence, of kings and kingdoms. This is applied to the preaching of the gospel in the Gentile world, Rom. xvi. 21. These words are there quoted according to the Septuagint translation; To whom he was not spoken of they shall see, and that they have not heard shall understand. As the things revealed had long been kept secret, so the persons to whom they were revealed, had long been kept in the dark; but now they shall see and consider the glory of God shining in the face of Christ, which before they had not been told, or had not heard. This shall be declared to them by the gospel of Christ, which could never be told them by all the learning of their philosophers, or the art of their diviners, or any of their pagan oracles. Much had been said in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah, much had been told them, and they had heard it. But as the queen of Sheba found concerning Solomon, when she had seen his wisdom, she shall far exceed what had been told them. Christ disappointed the expectations of those who looked for a Messiah according to their fancies, as the carnal Jews, but outdid theirs who looked for such a Messiah as was promised. According to their faith, nay, and beyond it, it was to them.

CHAP. LIII.

The two great things which the Spirit of Christ in the Old Testament prophets testified beforehand, were, the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that shall follow, 1 Pet. i. 11. And the first thing, so far as we, according to the sense of Moses and all the prophets, showed to be the drift and scope of them all, was, that Christ ought to suffer, and then to enter into his glory, Luke xxii. 26, 27. But no where in all the Old Testament is there so plainly and fully prophesied of, as here in this chapter, out of which divers passages are quoted, with application to Christ, in the New Testament. This chapter is
so replenished with the unsearchable riches of Christ, that it may be called rather, The gospel of the evangelist Isaiah, than, The prophecy of the prophet Isaiah. We may now advert to the apostle's view of Christ's sufferings, the meanness of his appearance, the greatness of his grief, and the prejudices which many conceived from thence against his doctrine, v. 1. 3. The rolling away of this reprobation, and the stamping of immortal honor upon his undertaking, notwithstanding the disadvantage and ignominy of them, by four considerations. 1. That therein he did his Father's will, v. 4, 6, 10. 2. That thereby he made atonement for the sin of man, v. 4, 6, 8, 11, 12. For it was not for any sin of his own that he suffered, v. 9. 3. That he bore his sufferings with an invincible and exemplary patience, v. 5. 4. That he should prosper in his undertaking, and his sufferings should end in success. 

1. WHO hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? 2. For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4. He hath been a reproach to us, and we esteemed him not. 5. He was despised, and we esteemed him not. 6. We hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

The prophet, in the close of the former chapter, had foreseen and foretold the kind reception which the gospel of Christ should find among the Gentiles, that nations and their kings should hid it welcome, that they who had not seen him should believe in him, and though they had not any prophecies among them of gospel-grace, which might raise their expectations, and dispose them to entertain it, yet upon their first notice of it they should give it its due weight and consideration; now, here he foretells, with wonder, the unbelief of the Jews, notwithstanding the previous notices they had of the coming of the Messiah in the Old Testament, and the opportunity they had of being personally acquainted with him. Observe here,

1. The contempt they put upon the gospel of Christ, v. 1. The unbelief of the Jews, in our Saviour's time, is here hinted at; for the Jews refused this word, John xii. 38. And it is applied likewise to the little success which the apostle's preaching met with among Jews and Gentiles, Rom. x. 16. Note, 1. Of the many that hear the report of the gospel, there are few, very few, that believe it. It is reported openly and publicly, not whispered in a corner, or confined to the schools, but proclaimed to all; and it is so faithful a saying, and so well worthy that report that once given it can be universally received and believed; but it is quite otherwise; few believed the prophets who spoke before of Christ; when he came himself, none of the rulers, or of the Pharisees followed him, and but here and there one of the common people; and when the apostles carried this report all over the world, even in that place believed, but, comparatively speaking, not very much. 2. Therefore people believe not the report of the gospel, because the arm of the Lord is not revealed to them; they do not discern, nor will be brought to acknowledge, that divine power which goes along with the word; the arm of the Lord is made bare (as was said ch. lii. 16.) in the miracles that were wrought to confirm Christ's doctrine in the wonder-
loved, Cant. v. 9. Moses, when he was born, was exceeding fair, to that degree, that he was looked upon as a happy prodigy, Acts vii. 20. Heb. xvi. 23. David, when he was anointed, was of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to, 1 Sam. xvi. 12.

But our Lord Jesus had nothing of that to recommend him. Or, it may refer, not so much to his person, as to the manner of his appearing in the world, which had nothing in it of sensibility. He was God’s precious gift; and that animation of men’s wisdom, but with all plainness, agreeable to the subject.

(4.) It was expected that he should live a pleasant life, and have a full enjoyment of all the delights of the sons and daughters of men, which would have invited all sorts to him; but quite contrary, he was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. It was not only his last scene that was tragic, but his whole life was so, not only mean, but miserable; — but one continued chain

Of labour, sorrow, and consuming pain.—Sir. R. B.

Thus, being made Sin for us, he underwent the sentence sin had subjected us to, that we should eat in sorrow all the days of our life, (Gen. iii. 17.) and thereby relaxed much of the rigour and extremity of the sentence as to us. His condition was, upon many accounts, sorrowful; he was unworthy, had not where to lay his head, lived upon alms, was opposed and menaced, and endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; his spirit was tender, and he admitted the impressions of sorrow; we never read that he laughed, but often that he wept. Lentulus, in his Epistle to the Roman senate concerning Jesus, says, He was never seen to laugh; and so worm and nauseated was he, that he turned grey, so, that, when he was but a little above thirty years of age, he was taken to be near fifty, John viii. 57. Grief was his intimate acquaintance; for he acquainted himself with the grievances of others, and sympathized with them, and he never set his own at a distance; for, in his transfiguration, he talked of his own decease; and, in his triumph, he went over Jerusalem. Let us look unto him, and mourn.

2. The low opinion that men had of him, upon this account—they being generally apt to judge of persons and things by the sight of the eye, and according to outward appearance; they saw no beauty in him, that they should desire him. There was a great deal of true beauty in him, the beauty of grace and innocence, which was form and could render him the Desire of all nations; but the far greater part of those among whom he lived and conversed, saw none of this beauty, for it was spiritually discerned. Carnal hearts see no excellency in the Lord Jesus, nothing that should induce them to desire an acquaintance with him or interest in him. Nay, he is not only not desired, but despised, and abhorred, a Reproach of men, an Abject, the that men were shy of keeping company with, and had not any esteem for: A Worm and no man. He was despised as a Man, rejected as a bad man; he was the Stone which the builders refused, they would not have him to reign over them; men, who should have had so much reason as they had, to behve better, so much inwardness, as not to trample upon a man in misery, men, whom he came to seek and save, they rejected him: We hid as it were our faces from him, looked another way, and his sufferings were as nothing to us; though never sorrow was like unto his sorrow. Nay, we not only behav’d as having no concern for him, but as loathing him, and having him in detestation.” It may be read, He hid as it were his face from us, concealed the glory of his majesty, and drew a veil over it, and therefore he was despised, and we esteemed him not, because we could not see through that veil. Christ having undertaken to make satisfaction to the justice of God for the injury man had done him in his honour by sin, (and God cannot be injured except in his honour,) he did it not only by divesting himself of the glory due to an incarnate deity, but by submitting himself to the disgrace due to the worst of men and malefactors: and thus, by vilifying himself, glorified his Father: but this is a good reason why we should esteem him highly, and study to do him honour; let him be received by us, whom men rejected.

4. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. 9. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

In these verses, we have,

1. A further account of the sufferings of Christ: much was said before, but more is said here, of the very low condition to which he was abased and humbled himself, to which he became obedient, even to the death of the cross.

1. He had grief and sorrows: being acquainted with them, he kept up the acquaintance, and did not grow shy, no, not of such melancholy acquaintance. Were griefs and sorrows allotted him? He bore them, and blamed not his lot; he carried them, and did neither shrink from them, nor sink under them. The load was heavy, and the way long, and yet he did not tire, but persevered to the end, till he said, It is finished.

2. He was despised and bruised; he was stricken, smitten, and afflicted. His sorrows bruised him; and he felt pain and smart from them, they touched him in the most tender part, especially when God was dishonoured, and when he forsook him upon the cross. All along, he was smitten with the tongue, when he was envilled at and contradicted, put under the worst of characters, and had all manner of evil said against him, at last he was smitten with the band, with blow after blow.

3. He had wounds and stripes; he was scourged, not under the merciful restriction of the Jewish law, which allowed not above forty stripes to be given to the worst of malefactors, but according to the usage of the Romans. And his scourging, doubtless, was the more severe, because Pilate intended it as an equivalent for his crucifixion, and yet it proved a preface to it. He was wounded in his hands, and
feet, and side; though it was so ordered, that not a bone of him should be broken, yet he had scarcely in any part a whole skin, (how fond soever we are to sleep in one, even when we are called out to suffer,) and though he was crowned with thorns, to the soles of his feet, which were nailed to the cross, nothing appeared but wounds and bruises.

4. He was wronged and abused; (v. 7.) he was oppressed, injuriously treated, and hardly dealt with. That was laid to his charge, which he was perfectly innocent of, that laid upon him, which he did not deserve, and both he was oppressed and injured; he was afflicted both in mind and body; being oppressed, he laid it to heart, and though he was patient, was not stupid under it, but he mingled his tears with those of the oppressed, that have no comforter, because on the side of the oppressors there is power, Eccl. iv. 1. Oppression is a sore affliction, it has made many a wise man mad; (Eccl. vii. 7.) but our Lord Jesus, though when he was oppressed, he was afflicted, kept possession of his own soul.

5. He was judged and imprisoned; that is implied in his being taken from prison and judgment, v. 8. God having made him sin for us, he was proceeded against as a malefactor, he was apprehended and taken into custody, and made a Prisoner; he was judged, accused, tried, and condemned, according to the forms of law: God filed a proper cause against him, judged him in pursuance of that process, and laid him in the prison of the grave, at the door of which a stone was rolled and sealed. He was cut off by an untimely death from the land of the living, though he lived a most useful life, did so many good works, and they were all such, that one would be apt to think it was for some of them that he was laid to death, his flesh was made a sacrifice, for he was crucified between two thieves, as if he had been the worst of the three; and yet with the rich, for he was buried in a sepulchre that belonged to Joseph, an honourable counsellor. Though he died with the wicked, and, according to the common course of dealing with criminals, should have been cast to the dogs, as in the place of the dead, he was crucified, yet God foretold, and Providence so ordered it, that he should make his grave with the innocent, with the rich, as a mark of distinction put between him and those that really deserved to die, even in his sufferings.

II. A full account of the meaning of his sufferings. It was a very great mystery, that so excellent a person should suffer such hard things; and it is natural to ask with amazement, "How came it about? What evil has he done?" His enemies indeed looked upon him as suffering justly for his crimes; and though they could lay nothing to his charge, they esteemed him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted, v. 4. Because they hated him, and persecuted him, they thought that God did, that he was his Enemy, and fought against him; and therefore they were more inwardly, says, God has forsaken him; persevere and take him, Ps. lxxvi. 11. Those that are justly smitten, are smitten of God, for by him princes decree justice, and so they looked upon him to be smitten, justly put to death as a blasphemer, a deceiver, and an enemy to Caesar. They that saw him hanging on the cross, inquired not into the merits of his cause, but took it for granted that nothing good could, because of every thing that had to do with his charge, and that therefore vengeance suffered him not to live. Thus Job's friends esteemed him smitten of God, because there was something uncom mon in his sufferings. It is true, he was smitten of God, v. 10. (or, as some read it, he was God's smitten and afflicted, the Son of God, though smitten and afflicted,) but not in the sense in which they meant it: for though he suffered all these things,

He never did any thing in the least to deserve this hard Usage. Whereas he was charged with perverting the nation, and sowing sedition, it was utterly false, he had done no violence, but went about doing good. And whereas he was called that Deceiver, he never deserved that character, for there was no deceit in his mouth, (v. 9.) to which the apostle refers, (1 Pet. ii. 22.) He did no sin, neither was guilt found in his mouth; he never offended in heart or deed, nor could any of his enemies take up that challenge of his. Which of you convinceth me of sin? The judge that condemned him, owned he found no fault in him; and the centurion that executed him, professed that certainly he was a righteous man.

2. He conducted himself under his suffering so as to make it appear that he did not suffer as an evil doer; for though he was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth, (v. 7.) no, not so much as to plead his own innocency, but freely offered himself to suffer and die for us, and objected nothing against it. This takes away the scandal of the cross, that he voluntarily submitted to it, for great and holy ends. By his wisdom he could have evaded the sentence, and by his power have resisted the execution; but that he was the Lamb of God, and as a sheep is dumb before the shearers, so, before the butchers, so he opened not his mouth; which denotes not only his exemplary patience under affliction, (Ps. lxxix. 9.) and his meekness under reproach, (Ps. xvi. 13. but his cheerful compliance with the decree, Not my will, but thine be done; lo, I come. By this will we are sanctified; his making his own soul, his own life, an offering for our sin.

3. It was for our good, and in our stead, that Jesus Christ suffered; this is asserted here plainly and fully, and in a very great variety of emphatical expressions.

(1.) It is certain that we are all guilty before God; we have all sinned, and have come short of the glory of God; (v. 6.) All we like sheep have gone astray, one as well as another; the whole race of mankind lies under the stain of original corruption, and every particular person stands charged with many actual transgressions. We have all gone astray from God our rightful Owner, alienated ourselves from him, from the ends he designed us to move towards, and the way he appointed us to move in. We have gone astray like sheep, which are apt to wander, and are unapt, when they are gone astray, to find the way home again. That is our true character; we are bent to backslide from God, but altogether unable of ourselves to return to him. This is mentioned not only as our infidelity, (that we go astray from God,) but as our corruption, (that we go astray, and expose ourselves to the beasts of prey;) but as our iniquity; we affront God, in going astray from him, for we turn aside every one to his own way, and thereby set up ourselves, and our own will, in competition with God and his will; which is the malignity of sin: instead of walking obediently in God's way, we have turned wilfully and stubbornly to our own way, the contrary course of our nature, the converse of our appetites and passions lead us to; we have set up for ourselves, to be our own masters, our own carvers, to do what we will, and have what we will; some think it intimates our own evil way, in distinction from the evil way of others. Sinners have their own iniquity, their beloved sin, which does most easily beset them; their own evil way, that they
4. Or, as it may be read, our sickness and our wounds: the LXX. read it, ours, and so the apostle, 1 Pet. ii. 24. Our original corruptions are the sickness and diseases of the soul, an habitual indisposition; our actual transgressions are the wounds of the soul, which put conscience to pain, if it be not scared and senseless. Or, our sins are called our griefs and sorrows, because all our griefs and sorrows are owing to our sins; and our sins deserve all griefs and sorrows, even those that are most extraneous and everlasting.

3. Our Lord Jesus was appointed, and did undertake to make satisfaction for our sins, and to save us from the penal consequences of them.

1. He was appointed to do it, by the will of his Father, for the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. God chose him to be the Saviour of poor sinners, and would have him to save them in this way, by bearing their sins, and the punishment of them; not the idem, the same that we should have suffered, but the tantundem, that which was more than equivalent for the maintaining of the honour of the holiness and justice of God in the government of the world. Observe here,

First, In what way we are saved from the ruin to which by sin we are become liable; by laying our sins on Christ, as the sins of the officer were laid upon the scape-goat; for the laying of our sins upon Christ implies the taking of them off from us; we shall not fall under the curse of the law, if we submit to the grace of the gospel: they were laid upon Christ when he was made Sin, a Sin-offering, for us, and redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a Curse for us; thus he put himself into a capacity to make those easy, that come to him heavy laden under the burden of sin. See Ps. li. 2.

Secondly, By whom this was appointed; it was the Lord that laid our iniquities on Christ; he contrived this way of reconciliation and salvation, and he accepted of the vicarious satisfaction Christ was to make. Christ was delivered to death by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. None but God had power to lay our sins upon Christ, both because the sin was committed against him, and to him the satisfaction was to be made, and because Christ, on whom the iniquity was to be laid, was his own Son, the Son of his love, and his holy Child Jesus, who himself knew no sin.

Thirdly, For whom this atonement was to be made; it was the iniquity of us all, that was laid on Christ; for in Christ there is a sufficiency of merit for all the sins of all the Gentiles; and the iniquities offer made of that salvation to all, which excludes none that do not exclude themselves. It intimates, that this is the one only way of salvation: all that are justified are justified by having their sins laid on Jesus Christ, and, though they were ever so many, he is able to bear the weight of them all.

2. He undertook to do it; God laid upon him our iniquities, but did not give consent to it? Yes, he did; for some think that the true reading of the next words, (ver. 7.) is, It was executed, and he answered: divine justice demanded satisfaction for our sins, and he engaged to make the satisfaction. He became our Surety, not as originally bound with us, but as Ball to the action: “Upon me he the curse, my Father.” And therefore when he was seized, he indentured with these into whose hands he surrendered himself, that that should be his disciples' discharge: If we seek me, let these go their way. John xviii. 8. By his own voluntary submission he made himself responsible for our debts, and it is well for us that he was responsible; thus he restored that which he took not away.

4. Having undertaken our debt, he underwent the penalty. Solomon says, He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it. Christ, being surety for us, did smart for it. [1.] He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows, v. 4. He not only submitted to the common infirmities of human nature, but to the common calamities of human life, which sin had introduced, but he underwent the extremities of grief, when he said, My soul is exceeding sorrowful. He made the sorrows of this present time heavy to himself, that he might make them light and easy for us. Sin is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery; Christ bore our sins, and so bore our griefs, bare them off us, that we should never be pressed above measure.

This is quoted, Matt. viii. 17, with application to the compassion Christ had for the sick that came to him to be cured, and the power he put forth to cure them. [2.] He did this by suffering for our sins; (v. 3.) He was wounded for our transgressions; to make atonement for them, and to purchase for us the pardon of them. Our sins were the thorns in Christ's crown, the nails in Christ's hands; and we bear them in his side. Wounds and bruises were the consequences of sin, what we deserved and what we had brought upon ourselves, ch. i. 6. That these wounds and bruises, though they are painful, may not be mortal, Christ was wounded for our transgressions, was tormented, or pained, (the word is used for the pains of a woman in travail,) for our unrighteous judgments, for our injuries, for our guilt, for our iniquities; they were the procuring cause of his death. To the same purport, v. 8. For the transgression of my people was he smitten, was the stroke upon him, that should have been upon us; and so some read it, He was cut off for the iniquity of my people, unto whom the stroke belonged, or was due. He was delivered to death for our offences, Rom. iv. 25. Hence it is said to be according to the scriptures, according to this scripture, that Christ died for our sins, 1 Cor. xv. 3. Some read this, by the transgressions of my people; by the wicked hands of the Jews, who were, in profession, God's people, he was stricken, was crucified and slain, Acts ii. 23. But, doubtless, we are to take it in the former sense, which is abundantly confirmed by the angel's prediction of the Messiah's undertaking, solemnly delivered to Daniel, that he shall finish transgression, make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity, Dan. ix. 24.

5. The consequence of this to us, is our peace and healing, v. 5. [1.] Herby we have peace; The chastisement of our peace was upon him; he, by submitting to these chastisements, slew the enmity of God's law, and became peace, Gal. iv. 4. The Lord Jesus Christ, who was made peace, being made peace, and he made peace by the blood of his cross. Whereas by sin we were become enemies to God's holiness, and obnoxious to his justice, through Christ God is reconciled to us, and not only forgives our sins, and saves us from ruin, but takes us into friendship and fellowship with himself, and thereby peace, all good, Col. i. 20. He is our Peace, Eph. ii. 14. Christ was in no wise that we might be at enmity, he gave satisfaction to the justice of God, that we might have satisfaction in our own minds, might be of good cheer, knowing that through him our sins are forgiven us. [2.] Herby we have healing; for by his stripes we are healed. Sin is not only a crime, for which we were condemned to die, and which Christ purchased for us the pardon of, but it
The sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

In the foregoing verses, the prophet had testified very particularly of the sufferings of Christ, yet mixing some hints of the happy issue of them; here he again mentions his sufferings, but largely foretells the glory that should follow. We may observe, in these verses,

1. The services and sufferings of Christ's state of humiliation. Come, and see how he loved us, see what he did for us.

2. He submitted to the frowns of Heaven (r. 10.) Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; to put him to pain, or torment, or grief. The scripture no where says, that Christ in his sufferings underwent the wrath of God; but it says here, (1.) That the Lord bruised him, not only permitted men to bruise him, but awakened his own sword against him, Zach. xiii. 7. They esteemed him smitten of God for some very great sin of his own; (r. 4.) now it was true that he was smitten of God, but it was for our sin; the Lord bruised him, for he did not spare him, but delivered him up for us all, Rom. viii. 32.

3. He did submit to it. He was not pleased to see his service disdained, and the work of his hands despised. (v. 7.) For the satisfaction of his soul; and to show the glory of the Lord. (v. 11.) He came to set men free from the chains of sin; and, by the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, he made way for the freedom of all men. (v. 9.) It pleased the Lord to do this; he determined to do it, it was the result of an eternal counsel; and it was an efficacious method for the salvation of men, and the securing and advancing of the honour of God.

4. He substituted himself. He endured the pains of sinners as a sacrifice. (v. 10.) He made his soul an offering for sin; he himself explains this, (Matt. xxvii. 28.) that he came to give his life a ransom for many. When men brought bulls and goats as sacrifices for sin, they made them indemnification for their own sins; here God, instead of himself, did that, and made Christ the sacrifice, in the stead of men, that they might go free. (v. 12.) He bare the sin of many, when he was in the flesh; he was made a sin for us, 2 Cor. v. 21. He bare the iniquities of many, (Isa. liii. 4.) that he might destroy them, and bring them to perfection. (v. 11.) He bare the sin of the people, (Isa. liii. 1.) and the sins of his people on himself. (v. 6.) He bare the sin of Israel, and they were as the stones of the breach, (v. 7.) He bare the reproaches of his people among the Gentiles. (v. 11.) He bare the reproaches of the sinners of the Gentiles. (v. 6.) He bare the sin of many, and the sins of many.

5. He submitted himself to it. He was not pleased to see his service disdained, and the work of his hands despised. (v. 7.) For the satisfaction of his soul; and to show the glory of the Lord. (v. 11.) He came to set men free from the chains of sin; and, by the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, he made way for the freedom of all men. (v. 9.) It pleased the Lord to do this; he determined to do it, it was the result of an eternal counsel; and it was an efficacious method for the salvation of men, and the securing and advancing of the honour of God.

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4. He suffered himself to be ranked with sinners, and yet offered himself to be an intercessor for sinners, v. 12.

(1.) It was a great aggravation of his sufferings, that he was numbered with transgressors, that he was not only condemned as a malefactor, but executed in company with two notorious malefactors, and he in the midst, as if he had been the worst of the three; in which circumstance of his suffering, the evangelist tells us this prophecy was fulfilled, Mark xv. 27, 28. Nay, the vilest malefactor of all, Barabbas, who was a traitor, thief, and murderer, was put in election with him for the favour of the people, and carried it; for they would not have Jesus that might save them, nor Barabbas. He was numbered among the transgressors; for he was called and counted a sabbath-breaker, a drunkard, and a friend to publicans and sinners.

(2.) It was a great commendation of his sufferings, and redeemed very much to his honour, that in his sufferings he made intercession for the transgressors, for those that reviled and crucified him; for he prayed, Father, forgive them; thereby showing not only that he forgave them, but that he was now doing that upon which their forgiveness, and the forgiveness of all other transgressors were to be founded. That prayer was the language of his blood, crying, not for vengeance, but for mercy, and therein it speaks better things than that of Abel, even for those who with wicked hands shed it. He could not see the world's spiritual and temporal glory and graces of his state of execution; and the graces he conferred on us are not the least of the glories conferred on him. These are secured to him by the covenant of redemption, which these verses give us some idea of. He promises to make his soul an offering for sin, consents that the Father shall deliver him up, and undertakes to lay down his life for many, which, the Father promises to glorify him, not only with the glory he had, as God, before the world was, (John xvii. 5.) but with the glories of the Mediator.

1. He shall have the glory of an everlasting Father; under this title he was brought into the world, (ch. ix. vi.) and he shall not fail to answer the title with the glory out of the world. In the promise made to Abraham, (who herein was a type of Christ,) that he should be the father of many nations, and so be the heir of the world, Rom. iv. 13, 17. As he was the root of the Jewish church, and the covenant was made with him and his seed, so is Christ of the universal church, and with him and his spiritual seed is the covenant of grace made, which is grounded upon, and granted in, the covenant of redemption, which here we have some of the glorious promises of. It is promised,

(1.) That the Redeemer shall have a seed to serve him and to bear up his name, Ps. xxii. 36. True believers are the seed of Christ; the Father gave them to him to be so, John xvii. 6. He died to purchase and purify them to himself, fell to the ground in a corner where he is horridly snatched, and much Fruit, John xii. 24. The word, that incorruptible seed, of which they are born again, is his word: the Spirit, the great Author of their regeneration, is his Spirit, and it is his image that is impressed upon them.

(2.) That he shall live to see his seed; Christ's children have a living Father, and because he lives they shall live also for ever (who is their life) not because he died, he rose again, and left not his children orphans, but took effectual care to secure them to the Spirit, the blessing, and the inheritance of sons. He shall see a great increase of them; the word is plural, He shall see his seeds, multitudes of them, so many that they cannot be numbered.

(3.) That he shall himself continue to take care of the affairs of this numerous family; He shall prolong his days. Many, when they see their seed, their seed's seed, have wished to depart in peace; but Christ will not commit the care of his family to any other, no, he shall himself live long, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, for ever and ever. Some refer it to believers, He shall see a seed that shall prolong its days, agreeing with Ps. lxxii. 29, 36. His seed shall endure for ever. While the world stands, Christ will have a church in it, which he himself will be the Life of.

(4.) That his great undertaking shall be successful, and shall answer expectation; The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. God's purposes shall take effect, and not one jot or tittle of them shall fail. Note, [1.] The work of man's redemption is in the hands of the Lord Jesus, and it is in good hands; it is well for us that it is in his, for our own hands are not sufficient for us, but he is able to save to the uttermost; it is in his hands, who upholds all things. [2.] It is the good pleasure of the Lord; which denotes not only his counsel concerning it, but his complacency in it; and therefore God loved him and was well pleased in him, because he undertook to lay down his life for the sheep. [3.] It has prospered hitherto, and shall prosper, whatever obstructions or difficulties have been, or may be, in the way of it. Whatever is undertaken according to God's pleasure shall prosper, ch. xlv. 10. Cyrus, a type of Christ, prospered in his hand, (ch. xliv. 28,) and therefore, no doubt, Christ shall. Christ was so perfectly well qualified for his undertaking, and prosecuted it with so much vigour, and it was from first to last so well devised, that it could not fail to prosper, to the honour of his Father, and the salvation of all his seed.

(5.) That the seller shall have abundant satisfaction in it; (v. 11.) He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; he shall see it beforehand, (so it may be understood,) he shall with the prospect of his sufferings have a prospect of the fruit, and he shall be satisfied with the bargain; he shall see it when it is accomplished in the conversion and salvation of poor sinners. Note, [1.] Our Lord Jesus was in travail of soul for our redemption and salvation, and to bring us to the promised inheritance to be delivered, and all the pains and toils he underwent were in order to it, and hastened it on. [2.] Christ does and will see the blessed fruit of the travail of his soul, in the founding and building up of his church, and the eternal salvation of all that were given him. He will not come short of his end in any part of his work, but will himself see that be not hindered in vain. [3.] The salvation of souls is a great satisfaction to the Lord Jesus; he will reckon all his pains well bestowed, and himself abundantly recompensed, if the many souls be by him brought through grace to glory. Let him have this, and he has enough. God will be satisfied and glorified, penitent believers shall be justified and pardoned, and the transgressors, who although being forementioned to Christ, it should be a satisfaction to us, if we. could do anything to serve the interests of God's kingdom in the world. Let it always be our meat and drink, as it was Christ's, to do God's will.

2. He shall have the glory of bringing in an everlasting righteousness; for so it was foretold concerning him, Dan. ix. 24. And here, to the same purpose, Doth he regard, the entrance, the hut when he was, and faith in him, shall my righteous Servant justify many; for he shall bear the sins of many, and so lay a foundation for our justification from sin. Note, [1.] The great privilege that flows to us from the death of Christ is, justification from sin: our being acquitted from that guilt which alone can ruin us, and accepted into Christ's favour, which alone can
make us happy. (2.) Christ, who purchased our justification for us, applies it to us, by his intercession made for us, his gospel preached to us, and his Spirit witnessing in us. The Son of man had power even on earth to forgive sins. (3.) There are many whom Christ justifies, not all, multitudes perish in their sins, yet many, even as many as he gave his life for, he will receive for ever. (4.) For he shall call. He shall justify, not here and there one that is eminent and remarkable, but those of the many, the despised multitude. (4.) It is by faith that we are justified, by our consent to Christ and the covenant of grace; in this way we are saved, because thus God is most glorified, free grace most advanced, self most absolved, and our happiness most actually secured. (6.) Faith is the knowledge of Christ, and without knowledge there can be no true faith. Christ's way of gaining the will and affections is by enlightening the understanding, and bringing that unfeignedly to assent to divine truths.

(6.) That knowledge of Christ, and that faith in him, by which we are justified, have reference to him, both as a Servant to God, and as a Surety for us. [1.] As one that is employed for our sin, if he had had any other interest for us, (it is made of God to us Righteousness, the Lord our Righteousness. [2.] As one that has undertaken for us. We must know him, and believe in him, as one that bore our iniquities—saved us from sinking under the load by taking it upon himself.

3. He shall have the glory of obtaining an uncontestable victory, and universal dominion, v. 12. Because he has done all these good services, therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and, according to the will of the Father, he shall divide the spoil with the strong, as a great general, when he has driven the enemy out of the field, takes the plunder of it for himself and his army; which is both an unquestionable evidence of the victory, and a recompense for all the toils and perils of his whole life. No victory is so richly rewarded as a victory gained in the name of Christ. (5.) He has encouraged us to reward the services and sufferings of Christ with great glory; "I will set him among the great, highly exalt him, and give him a name above every name." great riches are also assigned him; "He shall divide the spoil, shall have abundance of graces and comforts to bestow upon all his faithful soldiers. (3.) Christ comes at his glory by conquest; he has set upon the strong man armed; dispossessed him, and divided the spoil. He has vanquished principalities and powers, sin and Satan, death and hell, the world and the flesh; these are the strong that he has disarmed and taken the spoil of. (3.) Much of the glory with which Christ is recompensed, and the spoil which he has divided, consists in the vast multitudes of willing, faithful, loyal subjects that he has gathered into his kingdom. I will give many to him, and he shall obtain many for a spoil. God will give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, Ps. ii. 8. His dominion shall be from sea to sea. Many shall he wrought upon by the grace of God to give up themselves to him to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him, and hereby he shall exalt himself, and enrich, and abundantly recompense for all he did and all he suffered. (4.) What God designed for the Redeemer he shall certainly gain the possession of; I will divide it to him, and immediately it follows, "He shall divide it, notwithstanding the opposition that is given to him: for as Christ finished the work that was given him to do, so God completed the recompense that was promised him for it; for he is both able and faithful. (5.) The spoil which God divided to Christ, he divides, (it is the same word,) he distributes, among many. (6.) Thus the name of Christ was celebrated with great magnificence and splendour; he gained the praise of God, and received gifts for men, that he might give gifts to men; for he did himself reckon it more blessed and honoured to give than to receive, Acts xx. 35. Christ conquered for us, and through him we are more than conquerors; he has divided the spoils, the fruits of his conquest, to all that are his; let us therefore cast in our lot among them.

CHAP. LV.

The death of Christ is the life of the Church, and of all that truly belong to it; and therefore, very fitly, after the prophet had foretold the sufferings of Christ, he foretells the flourishing of the church, which is a part of his glory, and that exaltation of him which was the reward of his humiliation: it was promised him that he should see his seed, and that chapter is an explanation of that promise. It may easily be granted that it has a primary reference to the welfare and prosperity of the Jewish church after their return out of Babylon, which (as other things that happen to them) was typical of the glorious liberty of the Church of God, through Christ, which are brought into; yet it cannot be denied but that it has a further and principal reference to the gospel-church, into which the Gentiles were to be admitted. And the fifth words of our text are understood by the apostle Paul. (1.) The New Testament Jerusalem, (Gal. iv. 26, 27.) may serve as a key to the whole chapter, and that which follows. It is here promised concerning the Christian church. 1. That, though the beginnings of it were small, it should be greatly enlarged by the accession of many to it among the Gentiles, who had been wholly destitute of church-privileges, v. 1-5. 2. That, though sometimes God might seem to withdraw from her, and suspend the tokens of his favour, he would return in mercy, and would not return to contend with them any more, v. 6-10. 3. That though for awhile she was in sorrow, and under oppression, she should at length be advanced to greater honour and splendour than ever, v. 11, 12. 4. That knowledge, righteousness, and peace should flourish and prevail, v. 13, 14. 5. That all attempts against the church should be baffled, and she should be secured from the malice of her enemies, v. 14-17.

1. SING, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD. 2. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes: 3. For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. 4. Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. 5. For thy Maker is thy husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

If we apply this to the state of the Jews after their return out of captivity, it is a prophecy of the increase
of their nation after they were settled in their own land. Jerusalem had been in the condition of a wife childless, or a desolate, solitary widow; but now it is promised that the city should be replenished, and the country people again; that not only the ruins of Jerusalem should be repaired, but the suburbs of it extended on all sides, and a great many buildings erected upon new foundations. That those estates which had for many years been wrongfully held by the Babylonian Gentiles should now return to the right owners. God will again be a Husband to them, and the reproach of their captivity, and the small number to which they were then reduced, shall be forgotten. And it is to be observed, that by virtue of the ancient promise made to the seed of Abraham, the increase of the seed of his seed, when they were restored to God's favour they multiplied greatly. Those that first came out of Babylon, were but 42,000, (Ezra ii. 64.) about a 15th part of their number when they came out of Egypt; many came dropping to them afterward, but we may suppose that to be the greatest number that ever came in a body; and yet, above 500 years after, a little before their destruction by Mountains, a calculation was made by the number of the paschal lambs, and the lowest computation by that rule, (allowing only ten to a lamb, whereas they might be twenty,) made the nation to be near three millions; Josephus says, seven and twenty hundred thousand and odd; De Bell. Jud. lib. 7. cap. 17.

I. The low and languishing estate of religion in the world, for a long time before Christianity was brought in. It was like one barren, that did not bear, or travail with child, was like one desolate, that had lost her band and children; the church lay in a little compass, and brought forth little fruit. The Jews were indeed by profession married to God, but few prolesytes were added to them; the rising generations were unpromising, and serious godliness manifestly lost ground among them. The Gentiles had less religion among them than the Jews; their prolesytes were in a dispersion; and the children of the church were broken, reduced family, were scattered abroad, (John xi. 52.) did not appear, nor make any figure.

II. Its recovery from this low condition by the preaching of the gospel, and the planting of the Christian church.

1. Multitudes were converted from idols to the living God; those were the church's children, that had been before, were partakers of a new and divine nature, by the word: more were the children of the desolate than the married wife; there were more good people found in the Gentile church, (when that was set up,) that had been afar off, and without God in the world, than ever were found in the Jewish church. God's sealed ones out of the tribes of Israel are numbered; (Rev. vii. 4.) and those that comprised the church of thousands of Israel; but those of other nations were so many, and crowded in so thick, and lay so much scattered in all parts, that no man could number them, v. 9. Sometimes more of the power of religion is found in these places and families that have made little show of it, and have enjoyed but little of the means of grace, than in others that have distinguished themselves by a flourishing profession, and then more are the children of the desolate, more the fruits of their righteousness, than those of the married wife; so the last shall be first.

Now this is spoken of as matter of great rejoicing to the church, which is called upon to break forth into singing upon this account. The increase of the church is the joy of all its friends, and strengthens their hands. The longer the church has bin desolate, the greater will the transports of its joy be, when it begins to recover the ground it has lost, and to gain more. Even in heaven, among the angels of God, there is an uncommon joy for a sinner that repents; much more for a nation that does so. If the barren figure at length bring forth fruit, it is well, it shall rejoice, and others with it.

2. The bounds of the church were extended much further than ever before, v. 2, 3. (1.) It is here supposed that the present state of the church is a tabernacle-state; it dwells in tents, like the hiers of promise of old, (Heb. xi. 5.) its dwelling is mean and moveable, and of no strength against a few mists; and this state it was, for which, the church was prepared for hereafter. A tent is soon taken down and shifted, so the candlestick of church-privileges is soon removed out of its place, (Rev. i. 5.) and, when God pleases, it is as soon fixed elsewhere. (2.) Though it be a tabernacle-state, it is sometimes very remarkably a growing state; and if this family increase, no matter though it be in a tent. Thus it was in the first preaching of the gospel; it was the business of the apostles to disciple all nations, to stretch forth the curtains of the church's habitation, to preach the gospel there where Christ had not yet been named, (Rom. xvi. 20.) to heaven with the gospel those towns and countries that had hitherto been strangers to it, and so to lengthen the cords of this tabernacle, that more might be enclosed; which would make it necessary to stretch them proportionately, that they might bear the weight of the enlarged curtains. The more numerous the church grows, the more cautious she must be to fortify herself against errors and corruptions, and to support her seven pillars, Prov. ix. 1. (3.) It was a proof of divine power going along with the gospel, that power was manifested in its growth, (fire was nightly, Acts xix. 2.) It broke forth, as from breaking forth of waters; on the right hand, and on the left, on all hands, the gospel spread itself into all parts of the world; there were eastern and western churches. The church's seed inherited the Gentiles, and the cities that had been desolate, destitute of the knowledge and worship of the true God, came to be inhabited, for they have religion set up in them, and the name of Christ is received.

3. This was the comfort and honour of the church; (v. 4.) "Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed, as formerly, of the straitness of thy borders, and the fewness of thy children, which thine enemies upbraided thee with, but shalt forget the reproach of thy youth, because there shall be no more ground that reproach." It was the reproach of the Christian religion in its youth, that none of the rulers or princes of this world embraced it, and that it was entertained and professed by a despicable handful of men; but, after awhile, nations were discipled, the empire became Christian, and then this reproach of its youth was forgotten.

4. This was owing to the relation in which God stood to the church, that she might bring forth fruit unto God; (Rom. vii. 4.) the church is married to him, that she may bear and bring up a holy seed to God, that shall be accounted to him for a generation. Jesus Christ is the church's Maker, by whom she is formed into a people; her Redeemer by whom she is brought out of the bonds of sin, the worst of slaveries. This is he that espoused her to himself; and, (1.) He is the Lord of hosts, who has an irresistible power, an absolute sovereignty, and an universal dominion! Kings, who are lords of some hosts, find there are others, who are lords of other hosts, as many and mighty as
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6. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. 7. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. 8. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. 9. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. 10. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.

The seasonable succour and relief which God sent to his captives in Babylon, when they had a discharge from their bondage there, are here foretold, as a type and figure of all those consolations of God which are treasured up for the church in general, and all believers in particular, in the covenant of grace. 1. Look back to former troubles; in comparison with them, God's favours to his people appear very comfortable, v. 6, 8. Observe, 1. How sorrowful the church's condition had been; she had been as a woman forsaken, whose husband was dead, or had fallen out with her, though she was a wife of youth; upon which she could not have a comfort, for it was very ill, frets, and grows melancholy upon it; or, as one refused and rejected, and therefore full of discontent. Note, Even those that are espoused to God, may yet seem to be refused and forsaken, and may be grieved in spirit under the apprehensions of it; those that shall never be forsaken and left in despair, may yet for a time be perplexed and in distress. The similitude is supplied (as ch. xlii. 8, 9) the mountains (by which we understand great cases or troubles, for which there is a great deal of passion or dread) shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall stay, and shall continually be returned upon thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee. When God continues his people long in trouble, he seems to forsake them; so their enemies construe it, (Ps. lxii. 11,) so they themselves misinterpret it, ch. xlix. 14. When they are comfortless under their troubles, because their prayers and expectations are not answered, God hides his face from them, as if he regarded them not, nor despatched any kindness. God owns that he had done this; for he keeps an account of the afflictions of his people, and though he never turned his face against them, (as against the wicked, Ps. xxxvi. 16,) he remembers how often he turned his back upon them. This arose indeed from his displeasure, it was in wrath that he forsook them, and hid his face from them; (ch. lii. 17,) yet it was but in a little wrath; not that God's wrath ever is a little thing, or to be made light of, (Who knows the power of his anger? Jer. ix. 23,) little in comparison with what they had deserved, and within a small space of time; the vials of his wrath are poured out; he did not stir up all his wrath. But God's people, though they be sensible of ever so small a degree of God's displeasure, cannot but be grieved in spirit because of it. For the continuance of it, it was but for a moment, a small moment; for God does not keep his anger against his people for ever, n. it is soon over; as he has often in a small moment removed the affections of God's people, as they are light, so they are but for a moment, a cloud that presently blows over. 2. How sweet the returns of mercy would be to them, when God should come and comfort them according to the time that he afflicted them. God called them into covenant with himself, then when they were in the midst of all their troubles, and he gave them that assurance of their affections, then when they were most pressing, v. 6. God's anger endures for a moment, but God will gather his people when they think themselves neglected; will gather them out of their dispersions, that they may return in a body to their own land; will gather them into his arms, to protect them, embrace them, and bear them up; and will gather them at last to himself; and gather the wheat into his barn. He will have mercy on them; this supposes the turning away of his anger, and the admitting of them again into his favour. God's gathering of his people takes rise from his mercy, not any merit of theirs; and it is with great mercies, (v. 7.) with everlasting kindness, v. 8. The wrath is little, but the mercies great; the wrath for a moment, but the kindness everlasting. See how one is set over against the other, that we may neither despise our afflictions, nor despair of relief. 11. Look forward to future dangers, and in defiance of them. God's favours to his people appear very constant, and his kindness everlasting; for it is formed into a covenant, here called a covenant of peace, because it is founded in reconciliation, and is inclusive of all good. Now, 1. This is as firm as the covenant of providence; it is as the waters of Noah, as that promise which was made concerning the deluge, that there should never be the like again to disturb the course of summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, v. 9. God then contended with the world in great wrath, and for a full year, and yet at length returned in mercy, everlasting mercy; for he gave his word, which was inviolable, and if Noah's flood should never return, that he would never drown the world again; see Gen. viii. 21, 22—ix. 11. And God has ever since kept his word, though the world has been very provoking; and he will keep it to the end; for the world that now is, is reserved unto fire. And thus inviolable is the covenant of grace; I have sworn that I would not be wrath with thee; as I have as inviolable an oath, that Noah's flood should never return, that he would never drown the world again; and put out their name for ever and ever, Ps. ix. 3. 2. It is more firm than the strongest parts of the visible creation; (v. 10.) the mountains shall depart, which are called everlasting mountains, and the hills be removed, though they are called perpetual hills, Hab. iii. 6. Sooner shall they remove than...
God's covenant with his people be broken. Mountains have sometimes been shaken by earthquakes, and removed; and the people fear not the shock of any event. The day will come when all the mountains shall depart, and all the hills be removed, not only the tops of them covered, as they were by the waters of Noah, but the roots of them torn up for the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burned up; but then the covenant of peace between God and believers shall be as firm in the everlasting bliss of all those who are the children of that covenant. Mountains and hills signify great men, men of bulk and figure. Do these mountains seem to support the skies, (as Atlas,) and bear them up? They shall depart and be removed; creature-anchored hopes shall fall; in vain is salvation hoped for from those hills and mountains; but the firmament is firm, agreeably to its name; when those who seem to prop it are gone, when our friends fail us, our God does not, nor does his kindness depart. Do these mountains threaten, and seem to top the skies, and bid defiance to them, as Pelion and Ossa? Do the kings of the earth, and the rulers, set themselves against the Lord? They shall depart and be removed; great mountains, that stand in the way of the salvation of the church, shall be made flat (Zech. iv. 7.) but God's kindness shall never depart from his people, for whom he loves, he loves to the end; nor shall the covenant of his peace ever be removed, for he is the Lord that has mercy on his people, Therefore the covenant is immovable and inviolable, because it is built not on our merit, which is a mutable uncertain thing; but on God's mercy, which is from everlasting to everlasting.

11. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colons, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. 12. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. 13. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children. 14. In righteousness shall thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee. 15. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. 16. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. 17. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord; and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.

Very precious promises are here made to the church in her low condition, that God would not only continue his love to his people under their troubles, as before, but that he would restore them to their former prosperity, nay, that he would raise them to greater prosperity than in the former times they had enjoyed. In the foregoing chapter we had the humiliation and exaltation of Christ; here we have the humiliation and exaltation of the church; for if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him. Observe, I. The distressed state the church is here reduced to by the providence of God; (v. 11.) O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted, that art tossed with tempests, like a ship driven before anchors by a storm, and hurried into the ocean, where she is ready to be swallowed up by the waves, and in this condition not comforted by any compassionate friend that will sympathize with thee, or suggest to thee any encouraging considerations, (Ecc. iv. 1.) not comforted by any ally to thy trouble, or prospect of deliverance, out of the storm. This was the condition of the Jews in Babylon, and afterward for a time, under Antiochus; it is often the condition of Christian churches, and of particular believers; without any fightings, within are fears, they are like the disciples in a storm, ready to perish; and where is their faith? II. The glorious state the church is here advanced to by the providence of God. God takes notice of the afflicted, distressed state of his church; he comforts her, when she is most disconsolate, and has no other comforter. Let the people of God, when they are afflicted and tossed, think they hear God speaking comfortably to them by these words, taking notice of their griefs and fears, what afflictions they are under, what terrors they are in, and what comforts their case calls for; when they bewail themselves, God bemoans them, and speaks to them with pity, O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted; for in all their afflictions he is afflicted. But this is not all; he engages to raise her up out of her affliction, and encourages her with the assurance of great things he would do for her, both for her prosperity, and for the securing of that prosperity to her. 1. Whereas now she lay in disgrace, God promises that which would be her beauty and honour, which would make her easy to herself, and amiable in the eyes of others. (1.) This is here promised by a similitude taken from a city, and it is an apt similitude, for the church is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Jerusalem lay in ruins, a heap of rubbish, it shall be built up, shall be consoled and beautified, and appear more splendid than ever; the stones shall be laid not only firm, but fine, laid with fair colours, they shall be glittering stones, 1 Chron. xxix. 2. The foundation shall be laid or garnished with sapphires, the most precious of the precious stones here mentioned; for Christ, the church's foundation, and the foundation of the apostles and prophets, is this: the windows of this house, city, or temple, shall be made of agates, the gates of carbuncles, and all the borders, the walls that enclose the courts, or the boundaries by which her limits are marked, the mere stones shall be of pleasant stones, v. 12. Never was this literally true; but it intimates, [1.] That God having graciously undertaken to build his church, it is not to be expected that he should be fretted that he be wrought in it, which is very great and uncommon. [2.] That the glory of the New Testament church shall far exceed that of the Jewish church; not in external pomp and splendour, but in these gifts and graces of the Spirit which are infinitely more valuable; that which is more precious than rubies. (Prov. iii. 15.) that the precious and the unsearchable, and the eyes of the heart, which the mind of flesh cannot equal, Job xxviii. 16, 19. [3.] That the
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not meat and drink, but this righteousness and peace, holiness and love.

2. Whereas now she lay in danger, God promises that which would be her protection and security. God engages her that though in the day of her distress without were fightings and within were fears, now she shall be safe from both.

(1.) There shall be no fears within; (v. 14.) "Thou shalt be far from oppression; those that have oppressed thee shall be removed, those that would oppress thee shall be restrained, and therefore thou shalt not fear, but mayest look upon it as a thing at a distance, that thou art now in no danger.

Thou shalt be far from terror, not only from evil, but from the fear of evil, for it shall not come near thee, so as to do thee any hurt, or to put thee in any fright." Note, Those are far from terror, that are far from oppression; for it is as great a terror as can fall on a people, to have the rod of government turned into the serpent of oppression, because against this there is no fence, nor is there any flight from it.

(2.) There shall be no fightings without; though attempts should be made upon them to insult them, to invade their country, or besiege their towns, they shall all be in vain, and none of them succeed, v. 15. It is granted, "They shall surely gather together against thee, thou must expect it, the confederate force of hell and earth will be renewing their assaults.

As long as there is a devil in hell, and a persecutor in the world, God's people must expect frequent alarms; but, [1.] God will not own them, will not give them either commission or countenance; they gather together, hand joins in hand, but it is not by me. God gave them no such order as he did to Sennacherib, to take the spoil, and take the prey, ch. x. 6. And therefore, [2.] Their attempts will end in their own ruin; "Whosoever shall gather together against thee, be they ever so mighty, they shall not only be baffled, but they shall fall for thy sake, or they shall fall before thee, which shall be the just punishment of their enmity to thee." God will make them to fall for the sake of the love he bears to his church, and the care he has of it, in answer to the prayers made by his people, and in pursuance of the promises made to them; "They shall fall, that thou mayest stand," Ps. xxxvii. 2.

Now, that we may with the greatest assurance depend upon God for the safety of his church, we have here,

First, The power of God over the church's enemies asserted, v. 16. The truth is, they have no power but what is given them from above, and he that gave them their power can limit and restrain them; "Hitherto they shall go, and no further. 1. They cannot carry on their design without arms and weapons of war; and the smith that makes those weapons is God's creature, and he gave them his skill to work in iron and brass, (Exod. xxxi. 3, 4.) and particularly to make proper instruments for warlike purposes. It is melancholy to think, as if one did not know that God has created the smith, and ingenious and industrious they are to make instruments of death, and to find out ways and means to kill one another. The smith blows the coals in the fire, to make his iron malleable, to soften it first, that it may be hardened into steel, and so he may bring forth an instrument proper for their work that seek to destroy.

It is the iron age that is the age of war, for in God has created the smith, and therefore can tie his hands, so that the project of the enemy shall miscarry, (as many a project has done,) for want of arms and ammunition. Or the smith that forges the weapons is perhaps put here for the council of war that forms the design, blows the coals of contention, and brings forth the plan of
the war; these can do no more than God will let them. 2. They cannot carry it on without men, they must have soldiers, and it is God that created the waster to destroy. Military men value themselves upon their great offices and splendid titles, and even the common soldiers call themselves gentlemen; but God calls them servants to destroy, few wasting and destruction are their business. They think their own ingenuity, labour, and experience made them soldiers; but it was God that created them, and gave them strength and spirit for this hazardous employment; and therefore he not only can restrain them, but will serve his own purposes and designs by them.

Secondly, The promise of God concerning the church's enemies, who shall be set down, as the heritage of the servants of the Lord, (v. 17.) as that which they may depend upon and be confident of, That God will protect them from their adversaries both in camps and courts.

1. From their field-adversaries, that think to destroy them by force and violence, and dint of sword; "No weapon that is formed against thee," (though ever so artfully formed by the smith that blows the coals, v. 16.) though ever so skilfully managed by the waster that seeks to destroy, "shall prosper; it shall not prove strong enough to do any harm to the people of God; it shall miss its mark, shall fall out of the hand, or perhaps recoil in the face of him that uses it against thee. It is the happiness of the church, that its enemies, whether formed in the earth, or in the air, shall not prosper long, and therefore the folly of its enemies will at length be made manifest to all, for they are but preparing instruments of ruin for themselves.

2. From their law-adversaries, that think to run them down, under colour of right and justice. When the weapons of war do not prosper, there are tongues that rise in judgment; both are included in the gates of hell, that seek to destroy the church, for they had their courts of justice, as well as their magazines and military stores, in their gates. The tongues that rise in judgment against the church, are such as either demand a demimur over it, as if God's children were their lawful captives, pretending an authority to oppress their consciences; or they are such as misrepresent them, and falsely accuse them, and by slanders and calumnies endeavour to make them odious to the people and obnoxious to the government. This the enemies of the Jews did, to incense the kings of Persia against them; (Ezra iv. 12. Esth. iii. 8.) "But these insulting, threatening tongues thou shalt condemn; thou shalt have wherewith to answer their insolent demands, and to put to silence their malicious reflections. Thou shalt do it by well-doing; or, or, their reward for their righteousness, and I will make an everlasting covenant with thee, even the sure mercies of David. 4. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. 5. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

Here, 1. We are all invited to come and take the benefit of that provision which the grace of God has made for poor souls in the new covenant of the New Testament. 2. The benefits which flow to us from the resurrection of Christ, (Acts xiii. 34.) which may serve as a key to this chapter; not that it was intended for the comfort of the people of God that lived then, especially of the captives in Babylon, and the other dispersed of Israel; but unto us was this gospel preached as well as unto them, and much more clearly and fully in the New Testament. Here is, 1. A free and gracious invitation to all, to come and take the benefit of gospel-grace, v. 1. 2. Pressing arguments to enforce this invitation, v. 2. 3. 4. 5. A promise of the success of this invitation among the Gentiles, v. 2. 3. 4. 5. We are to be comforted in the redemption and reformation, with great encouragement given to hope for pardon and forgiveness thereupon, v. 6. 9. 5. The ratification of all this, with the certain efficacy of the word of God, who has promised, that in a particular instance of the accomplishment of it in the return of the Jews out of their captivity, which was intended for a sign of the accomplishment of all these other promises.

1. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. 2. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. 3. Incline your ear, and *come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. 4. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. 5. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

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CHAP. LV

As we have much of Christ in the 53rd chapter, and much of the church of Christ in the 54th chapter, so in this chapter we have much of the covenant of grace made with us in Christ. The sure mercies of David which are foretold here, (v. 3.) are applied by the apostle to the benefits which flow to us from the resurrection of Christ, (Acts xiii. 34.) which may serve as a key to this chapter; not that it was intended for the comfort of the people of God that lived then, especially of the captives in Babylon, and the other dispersed of Israel; but unto us was this gospel preached as well as unto them, and much more clearly and fully in the New Testament. Here is, 1. A free and gracious invitation to all, to come and take the benefit of gospel-grace, v. 1. 2. Pressing arguments to enforce this invitation, v. 2. 3. 4. 5. A promise of the success of this invitation among the Gentiles, v. 2. 3. 4. 5. We are to be comforted in the redemption and reformation, with great encouragement given to hope for pardon and forgiveness thereupon, v. 6. 9. 5. The ratification of all this, with the certain efficacy of the word of God, who has promised, that in a particular instance of the accomplishment of it in the return of the Jews out of their captivity, which was intended for a sign of the accomplishment of all these other promises.

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covenant excludes none that do not exclude themselves. The invitation is published with an Oyaz, Ho, that take notice of it. He that has ears to hear, let him hear.

(2.) Christ is the qualification required in those that shall be welcome; they must thirst. All shall be welcome to gospel-grace, upon those terms only, that gospel-grace be welcome to them. Those that are satisfied with the world and its enjoyments for a portion, and seek not for happiness in the favour of God; those that depend upon the merit of their own works for a righteousness, and see no need they have of Christ and his righteousness; these do not thirst, they shall not be welcome to him. Our sin and uncer- tainness about their souls, and therefore will not condescend so far as to be beholden to Christ: but those that thirst, are invited to the waters, as those that labour, and are heavy-laden, are invited to Christ for rest. Note, Where God gives grace, he first gives to thirst after it; and where he has given to thirst after it, he will give it, Ps. lxxxii. 10.

(3.) Whither they are invited; Come ye to the waters. Come to the water-side, to the ports, and quays, and wharves, on the navigable rivers, into which goods are imported, thither come and buy, for that is the market-place of foreign commodities; and to us they would have been for ever foreign, if Christ had not brought in an everlasting righteousness. Come to Christ, for he is the Fountain opened, he is the Rock smitten. Come to holy ordinances, take and apply them to yourselves; this you may make your own by an application of the grace of the gospel to yourselves; make it your own upon Christ's terms, as your own upon any terms, and stand not hesitating about the terms, or deliberating whether you shall agree to them. (1.) Come, and eat; make it still more your own, as that which we eat is more our own than that which we only buy. We must buy the truth, not that we may lay it by, to be looked at, but that we may feed and feast upon it, and that the spiritual life may be nourished and strengthened by it. We must buy necessary provisions for our souls, be willing to part with any thing, though ever so dear to us, so that we may but have Christ and his graces and comforts; we must part with sin, because it is an opposition to Christ; part with all opinion of our own righteousness, as standing in competition with Christ; and part with life itself, and its most necessary supports, rather than quit our interest in Christ. And when we have bought what we need, let us not deny ourselves the comfortable use of it, but enjoy it, and eat the labour of our hands; buy, and eat.

(4.) What are they invited to do; (1.) Come, and buy. Never did any tradesman court customers that he hoped to get by, so as Christ courts us to that which we only are to be gainers by; Come and buy, and we can assure you, you shall have a good bargain, which you will never repent of or look back upon. Come that you may; gladness of heart is your own; come to them, and though they may seem to you plain and common things, like waters, yet to those who believe in Christ, the things signified will be as wine and milk, abundantly refreshing. Come to the healing waters, come to the living waters; whoever will, let him come, and take of the waters of life, Rev. xxi. 17. Our Saviour referred to it, (John v. 27.) If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.

(5.) What is the provision they are invited to; (1.) Come, and buy wine and milk, which will not only nourish the body, but also the soul. "But nourish the body, and revive the spirits." The world comes short of our expectations; we promise ourselves, at least, water in it, but we are disappointed of that, as the troops of Tima, Job vi. 19. But Christ outdoes our expectations; we come to the waters, and would be glad of them, but we find there wine and milk, which were the staple commodities of the tribe of Judah, and which the Shiloh of that tribe is furnished with to entertain the gathering of the people to him; Gen. xlix. 10, 12. His eyes shall be upon the wine, and his teeth with milk. We must come to Christ for his milk, for babies, to nourish and cherish them that are but lately born again; and with him strong men shall find that which will be a cordial to them; they shall have wine to make glad their hearts. We must part with our puddle-water, nay, with our poison, that we may procure this wine and milk.

(2.) The free communications of this provision; Buy it without money, and without price. Buy the benefit of buying, not only without ready money, (that is common enough,) but without any money, or the promise of any; yet it seems not so strange to those who have observed Christ's counsel to Laodicea, that was wretchedly poor, to come and buy, Rev. iii. 17, 18. Our buying without money, intimates, (1.) That the gifts offered us are invaluable, and such as no price can be set upon. Wisdom is that which cannot be bought for gold. (2.) That he who offers them has no need of us, or of any returns we can make him. He makes us these proposals, not because he has occasion to sell, but because he has a disposition to give. (3.) That the things offered are already bought and paid for; Christ purchased them at the full value, with price, not with money, but with his own blood. We shall be welcome to the benefits of the promise, though we are utterly unworthy of them, and cannot make a tender of any thing that looks like a valuable consideration. We ourselves are not of any value, nor any thing we have, or can do, and we must own it, that if Christ and heaven be ours, we may see ourselves for ever indebted to free grace.

(6.) We must be persuaded to accept this invitation, and make this good bargain for ourselves.

1. That which we are persuaded to is, to hearken to God, and to his proposals; "Hearken diligently unto me, v. 2. Not only give me the hearing, but approve of what I say, and apply it to yourselves, v. 3. Incline your ear, as you do to that which you apply yourselves concerned in, and pleased with; bow the ear, and let it be bent and pressed, and the spirit in the con- ciliating methods of the gospel; bend the ear this way, that you may hear with attention and remark; hear, and come unto me, not only come and treat with me, but comply with me, come up to my terms. Accept God's offers as very advantageous, answer his demands as very fit and reasonable."  

2. The arguments used to persuade us to this, are taken,

(1.) From the unspeakable wrong we do to ourselves if we neglect and refuse this invitation; "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, which will not yield you, no, not eggar's food, dry bread, when with me you may have wine and milk without money? Wherefore do you spend your labour, and tell for that which will not be so much as dry bread to you, for it satisfies not?"

See here, [1.] The vanity of the things of this world; they are not bread, not proper food for a soul, they afford no suitable nourishment or refreshment. Bread is the staff of the natural life, but it affords no support at all to the spiritual life. All the wealth and pleasure in the world will not make one meal's meat for a soul. Eternal truth and eternal good are the only food for a rational and immortal soul, the life of which consists in reconciliation and conformity to God, and in union and communion with him, which the things of the world will not at all befriend. They satisfy not, they yield not any solid comfort and content to the soul, nor enable it to say, "Now
I have what I would have." Nay, they do not satisfy even the appetites of the body; the more men have, the more they would have, Eccl. i. 8. Human was unsatisfied in the midst of his abundance. They flatter, but they do not fill; they please for awhile, like the dream of a hungry man, who wakes and his soul is empty. They soon fail, it, they do not satisfy; they cloy a man, but do not content him, or make him truly easy. It is all vanity and vexation.

[2.] The folly of the children of this world; they spend their money and labour for these uncertain, unsatisfying things. Rich people live by their money, poor people by their labour; but both mistake the matter, and run to the world, rather toiling, for the world, both promising themselves satisfaction and happiness in it, but both miserably disappointed. God vouchsafes compassionately to reason with them; "Wherefore do you thus set against your own interest? Why do you suffer yourselves to be thus imposed upon?" Let us reason thus with ourselves, and let the result of these reasons be, a holy resolution not to labour for the meat that perishes, but for that which endures to everlasting life, John vi. 27. Let all the disappointments we meet with in the world, help to drive us to Christ, and to seek for satisfaction in him only. This is the way to make that sure, which will be made sure.

[2.] From the unspeakable kindness we do to ourselves, if we accept this invitation, and comply with it.

[1.] Hereby we secure to ourselves present pleasure and satisfaction; "If you hearken to Christ, you eat that which is good, which is both wholesome and pleasant, good in itself and good for you." God's word and promise, a good conscience, and the comforts of God's good Spirit, are a continual feast to those that hearken diligently and obediently to Christ. They shall delight themselves in the Lord; in the richest and most grateful delights. Here the invitation is not, "Come, and buy," lest that should discourage, but, "Come, and eat, come and enterin yourselves with that which will be abundantly pleasant; eat, O friends." It is sad to think that men should need to be courted thus to their own ends.

[2.] Hereby we secure to ourselves lasting happiness; "Hear and your soul shall live, you shall not only be saved from perishing eternally, but you shall be eternally blessed;" for less than that cannot be the life of an immortal soul. The words of Christ are spirit and life, to the spirits, (John vi. 33, 63.) the words of this life, Acts v. 20. On what easy terms is happiness offered to us! It is but "Hear, and you shall live."

[3.] The great God graciously secures all this to us; "Come to me, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, will put myself into covenant relations, and under covenant-engagements to you, and therby settle upon you the sure mercies of David." Note, First, If we come to God to serve him, he will covenant with us, he will do us good, and make us happy; such are his concordant, his earnest, and particular desires. Secondly, God's covenant with us is an everlasting covenant; its continuance from everlasting, its continuance to everlasting. Thirdly, The benefits of this covenant are mercies suited to our case, who, being miserable, are the proper objects of mercy. They come from God's mercy, and are mercies for us; in kind, as well as in degree. Fourthly, They are the mercies of David, such mercies as God promised to David, (Ps. lxxxix. 28, 29, &c.) and are appeared to by Solomon, 2 Chron. vi. 42. It shall be a covenant as sure as that with David, Jer. xxxiii. 25, 26. The covenant of royalty was a figure of the covenant of grace, 2 Sam. xxviii. 5. Or, rather, by David here, we are to understand the Messiah. Cov enant-matters are all his mercies; they are purchased by him, they are promised in him, they are treasured up in his hand, and out of his hand they are dispensed to us. He is the Mediator and Trustee of the covenant; to him this is applied, Acts xviii. 1. They are the real holy things of David; the word used there, and by the LXX. here, for they are confirmed by the holiness of God, (Ps. lxxxix. 33.) and are intended to advance holiness among men. Lastly, They are sure mercies; the covenant, being well-ordered in all things, is sure. It is sure in the general proposal of it; God is real and sincere, serious and earnest, in the choice of his people; he does not deal as the world does; he is sure in the particular application of it to believers; God's gifts and callings are without repentance; they are the mercies of David, and therefore sure, for in Christ the promises are all yea and amen.

III. Jesus Christ is promised for the making good of all the other promises which we are here invited to accept of, v. 4. He is that David, whose sure mercies are the blessings and benefits of the covenant are. And God has given him in his purpose and promise, has constituted and appointed him; and in the fulness of time will as surely send him as if he were already come, to be all that to us, which is necessary to our having the benefits of these preparations. He has given him freely; for what more free than a gift? There was nothing in us to merit such a gift, but Christ himself, and Christ has given one, 1. To attest the truth of the promises which we are invited to take the benefit of; and Christ is given for a Witness that God is willing to receive us into his favour upon gospel-terms, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, that we may venture our souls upon these promises with entire satisfaction. Christ is a faithful Witness, we may take his word; a competent Witness, for he is given, in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and was perfectly apprised of the whole matter. Christ as a Prophet, testifies the will of God to the world; and to believe is to receive his testimony. 2. To assist us in closing with the invitation, and coming up to the terms of it; we know not how to find the way to the waters where we are to be supplied, but Christ shows us how to come to the spring of waters. "I am the true vine; that we may be qualified for it, and become sharers in it, but he is given for a Commander, to show us what to do, and enable us to do it. Much difficulty and opposition lie in our way to Christ; we have spiritual enemies to grapple with, but, to animate us for the conflict, we have a good Captain, like Joshua; a Leader and Commander to tread our enemies under our feet, and to put us in possession of the land of promise. Christ is a Commander by his precept, and a Leader by his example; our business is to obey him, and follow him.

IV. The Master of the feast being fixed, it is, next, to be furnished with guests, for the provision shall not be lost, or made in vain, v. 5. 1. The Gentiles shall be called to this feast, shall be invited to the marriage supper, shall be numbered among the guests; "They shall call a nation that thou knowest not, that was not formerly called and owned as thy nation, that thou didst not send prophets to as to Israel, the people which God knew above all the families of the earth." The Gentiles shall now be favoured so as they never were before; their knowing God is said to be rather their being known of God, Gal. iv. 9. 2. They shall call upon him; Nations that knew not shall run unto thee; those that had long been far off from Christ, shall be made nigh, that had been running from him, shall run to him, with the greatest speed and alacrity imaginable. There shall be a concourse of believing Gentiles to Christ, who, being lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to...
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him. Now see the reason, (1.) Why the Gentiles will fain flock to Christ; it is because of the Lord his God, because he is the Son of God, and is declared to be so with power; because they now see his God is one with them whom they have to do, and there is no coming to him as their God but by making an interest in his Son. Those that are brought to be acquainted with God, and understand how the commonest truths are to be brought to perfection, who were enemies to Jesus Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, and there is no coming to God but by him. (2.) Why God will bring them to him; because he is the Holy One of Israel, true to his promises, and he has promised to glorify him, by giving him the heathen for his inheritance. When Greeks began to inquire after Christ, he said, The hour is come, that the Son of man shall be glorified. John xii. 22, 23. And his being glorified in his resurrection and ascension, was the great argument by which multitudes were wrought upon to run to him.

6. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. 7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. 9. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. 10. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow, from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; 11. So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it. 12. For ye shall go out with joy, and he led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. 13. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, and for an everlasting sign, that shall not be cut off.

We have here a further account of that covenant of grace which is made with us in Jesus Christ, both what is required, and what is promised, in the covenant, and those considerations that are sufficient abundantly to confirm our believing compliance with, and reliance on, that covenant. This gracious discovery of God lies between to him and them, cannot is not to be confined either to the Jew or to the Gentile, to the Old Testament or to the New, much less to the captives in Babylon. No, both the precepts and the promises here are given to all, to every one that thirsts after happiness, v. 1. And who does not? Hear this and live. 1. Here is a gracious offer made of pardon, and peace, and all happiness, to poor sinners, upon gospel-terms, v. 6, 7. 1. Let them pray, and their prayers shall be heard and answered; (v. 6) "Seek the Lord while he may be found. Seek him whom you have left by revolting from your allegiance to him, and whom you have lost by provoking him to withdraw his favour from you. Call upon him now while he is near, and within call." Observe here, (1.) The duties required. (1.) "Seek the Lord; seek to him, and inquire of him, as your Oracle; ask the law at his mouth, and judgment, and the law at his lips. Isaiah viii. 16, 17. Let your gratitude, and your inquiries after him, as your Portion and Happiness; seek to be reconciled to him, and acquainted with him, and to be happy in his favour. Be sorry that you have lost him, be solicitous to find him; take the appointed method of finding him, making use of Christ as your Way, the Spirit as your Guide, and the word as your rule. (2.) "Call upon him; pray to him to be reconciled, and be reconciled, pray for him every thing else you have need of." (2.) The motives made use of to press these duties upon us; While he may be found—while he is near. (1.) It is implied that now God is near, and will be found, so that it shall not be in vain to seek him, and to call upon him; now his patience is waiting on us, his word is calling to us, and his Spirit striving with us; let us now improve our advantages and opportunities, for the seeking of him. But (2.) There is a day coming when he will be afar off, and will not be found; when the day of his patience is over, and his Spirit will strive no more. There may come such a time in this life, when the heart is incurably hardened; it is certain that at death and judgment the door will be shut, Luke xvi. 26.— xiii. 25, 26. Mercy is now offered, but then judgment without mercy is to be pronounced. (2.) Let them repent and reform, and their sins shall be pardoned, v. 7. Here is a call to the unconverted, to the wicked and the unrighteous; to the wicked, who live in known gross sins, to the unrighteous, who live in the neglect of plain duties; to them is the word of this salvation sent, and all assurance given, that penitent sinners shall find God a pardoning God. Observe here, (1.) What it is to repent. There are two things in it; [1.] It is to turn from sin, it is to forsake it; it is to leave it, and to leave it with loathing and abhorrence, never to return to it again. The wicked must forsake his way, his evil way, as one would forsake a false way that will never bring us to the happiness we aim at, and a dangerous way, that leads to destruction. Let him not take the step of repentance, but, as the Scripture says, to turn there must be not only a change of the way, but a change of the mind; the unrighteous must forsake his thoughts. Repentance, if it be true, strikes at the root, and washes the heart from wickedness. We must alter our judgments concerning persons and things, disdike the corrupt imaginations, and quit the vain pretences which an unsanctified heart shelters itself under. Note, It is not enough to break off from evil practices, but we must enter a covenant against evil thoughts. Yet this is not all; [2.] To repent is to return to the Lord; to return to him as our God, our sovereign Lord, against whom we have rebelled, and to whom we are concerned to reconcile ourselves; it is to return to the Lord as the Fountain of life and living waters, which we had forsaken for broken cisterns. (3.) It is a recompense of esteem and approbation. If we do so, [1.] God will have mercy; he will not deal with us as our sins have deserved, but will have compassion on us. Misery is the object of mercy. Now both the consequences of sin, by which we are become truly miserable, (Ezek. xvi. 5, 6.) and the nature of repentance, by whom we are made sensible of our misery, and are enabled to be reconciled, (Psa. xxvii. 15.) both these make us objects of pity, and with God there are tender mercies. [2.] He will abundantly pardon. He will multiply to pardon.
If our sin has been very great, and very many; and though we have often backslidden, and are still prone to offend, yet God will repeat his pardon, and welcome even backsliding children that return to him in sincerity.

11. Here are encouragements given us to accept this offer, and to venture ourselves upon it. For look which way we will, we find enough to confirm us in the trust of the one, and the people of the other.

1. If we look up to heaven, we find God's counsels there high and transcendent; his thoughts and ways infinitely above ours, v. 8, 9. The wicked are bid to forsake their evil ways and thoughts, (v. 7.) and to return to God, to bring their ways and thoughts to concord and comply with his; "For" (says he) "my thoughts and ways are not as yours; you are conversant only about things beneath, they are of the earth, earthy; but mine are above, as the heaven is high above the earth; and if you would approve yourselves true penitents, yours must be so too, and your affections must be set on things above." Or, rather, it is to be understood as an encouragement to us to depend upon God's promise to pardon sin, upon repentance. Sinners may be ready to repent, and may, and ought to be ready to receive pardon; because, otherwise, they could not find in their hearts to be reconciled to one, who should have so basely and so frequently offended them. "But" (says God) "my thoughts in this matter are not as yours, but as far above them as heaven is above the earth." They are so in other things; men's sentiments concerning sin, and Christ, and holiness, concerning this world, and the other world, and of God, and in nothing more than in the matter of reconciliation. We think God apt to take offence, and backward to forgive; that if he forgives once, he will not forgive a second time. Peter thought it a great deal to forgive seven times; (Matt. xvii. 21.) and a hundred pence go far with us; but God meets returning sinners with pardoning mercy; he forgives freely, and, as he gives, it is without upbraiding. We forgive, and cannot forget; but when God forgives sin, he remembers it no more. Thus God invites sinners to return to him, by possessing them with good thoughts of him, as Jer. xxxi. 20.

2. If we look down to this earth, we find God's word there powerful and effectual, and answering all its great intentions, v. 10, 11. Observe here, (1.) God's word is the preacher of righteousness of nature; He saith in the snow, Be thou on the earth; he appoints when it shall come, to what degree, and how long it shall lie there; he saith so to the small rain and the great rain of his strength, Job xxxviii. 6. And according to his order they come down from heaven, and do whatsoever he commands them upon the face of the world, whether be it for ever, or for a season, for the land, or for the sea, Jacob. 12, 13. It returns not recompensed—without having accomplished something, but waters the earth, which he is therefore said to do from his chambers, Ps. cvi. 13. And the watering of the earth is in order to its fruitfulness; thus he makes it to bring forth and bud, for the products of the earth depend upon the dews of heaven; and thus it gives not only bread to be for ever, pleasant for the land, or for the sea, so to his family, but seed likewise to the sower, that he may have food for another year. The husbandman must be a sower as well as an eater, else he will soon see the end of what he has.

(2) The efficacy of his word in the kingdom of providence and grace, which is as certain as the form; he changes nature and nations; he is a mouth of prophets as it is in the hand of Prov-idence: it shall not return unto me void, as unable to effect what it was sent for, or meeting with an insuperable opposition; so, it shall accomplish that which I please," (for it is the declaration of his will, according to the counsel of which he works all things), "and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." This assures us, [1.] That the promises of God shall all have their full accomplishment in due time, and not one iota or tittle of them shall fail, I Kings viii. 56. These promises of mercy and grace shall have as real an effect upon the souls of believers, for their sanctification and comfort, as the promises of the word have upon the earth, with an accomplishing power, and a merciful ful. [2.] That according to the different errands on which the word is sent, it will have its different effects; if it be not a safeguard of life unto life, it will be a safeguard of death unto death; if it do not convince the conscience, and soften the heart, it will sour the conscience, and harden the heart; if it do not ripen for heaven, it will ripen for hell. See ch. vi. 9. One way or other, it will take effect. [3.] That love is coming into the world, as the dew from heaven, (Hos. xiv. 5.) will not be in vain. For if Israel be not gathered, he will be glorious in the conversion of the Gentiles; to them therefore tenders of grace must be made when the Jews refuse them, that the wedding may be furnished with guests, and the goel not return void.

3. If we take a particular view of the church, we shall find what great things God has done, and will do, for it; (v. 12, 13.) Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace. This refers, (1.) To the deliverance and return of the Jews out of Babylon. They shall go out of their captivity, and be led forth toward their own land again. God will go before them as surely, though not as sensibly, as before Abraham and his fathers in the pillar of cloud; and that they shall go out, not with trembling, but with triumph; not with any regret to part with Babylon, or any fear of being fetched back, but with joy and peace. Their journey home over the mountains shall be pleasant, and they shall have the good will and good wishes of all the countries they pass through. The hills and their inhabitants shall, as in a transport of joy, break forth into singing; and if the people should altogether hold their peace, even the trees of the field would attend them with their applause and acclamations. And when they come to their own land, it shall be ready to bid them welcome; for whereas they expected to find it all over grown with briars and thorns, it shall be set with fir-trees, and myrtle-trees; for though it lay desolate, yet God had promised that it should be planted with pleasant trees, which, when they were over, like the land after the sabbatical year, it was the better for. And this shall redound much to the honour of God, and be to him for a name. But, (2.) Without doubt it looks further; this shall be for an everlasting sign. That is, [1.] The redemption of the Jews out of Babylon shall be a ratification of those promises that relate to Gospel-grace, and the advantages and promises of it, and of those predictions relating to that great deliverance, would be a pledge and earnest of the performance of all the other promises, for thereby it shall appear that he is faithful, who has promised. [2.] It shall be a representation of the blessings promised, and a type and figure of them. First, Gospel-grace will set those at liberty, that were in bondage to sin and Satan. The Jews shall, out of the accomplishment of this promise, shall make them free, and then they shall be free indeed. Secondly, It will fill those with joy, that were melancholy, Ps. xiv. 7. Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall be glad. The earth and the inferior part of the creation shail share in the joy of this salvation, Ps. xvi. 11, 12. Thirdly, It will make a great change in all God's characters. These that were thorns and briars, good for nothing, and environed with thorns and briars, nay, hurtful and vexations, shall become graceful and useful as the fir-tree and the myrtle-tree. Thorns and briars came in with sin, and were the
fruits of the curse, Gen. iii. 18. The raising of pleasant trees in the room of them signifies the removal of the curse of the law and the introduction of gospel blessings. The church's enemies were as thorns and briers; but, instead of them, God will raise up friends to be her protection and ornament. Or it may denote the world's growing better; instead of a generation of thorns and briers, there shall come up a generation of fir-trees and myrtles; the children shall be wiser and better than the parents. And, fourthly, in all this God shall be glorified. It shall be to him for a name, by which he will be made known and praised, and by it the people of God shall be encouraged. It shall be for an everlasting sign of God's favour to them, assuring them that, thought it may for a time be clouded, it shall never be cut off. The covenant of grace is an everlasting covenant; for the present blessings of it are signs of everlasting ones.

ISAIAH.

CHAP. LVI.

After the exceedingly great and precious promises of gospel grace, typified by temporal deliverances, which we had in the foregoing chapter, we have here, I. A solemn charge given to us all to make conscience of our duty, as we hope to have the benefit of those promises, ver. 1, 2. II. Great encouragement given to strangers that were willing to come under the bonds of the covenant, assuring them of the blessings of the covenant, ver. 3-8. III. A high charge drawn up against the watchmen of Israel, that were careless and unfaithful in the discharge of their duty (ver. 9-12), which seems to be the beginning of a new sermon, by way of reproof and threatening, which is continued in the following chapters. And the word of God was intended for conviction, as well as for comfort and instruction in righteousness.

Evangelical Promises; Exhortations to Duty. (b. c. 706.)

1 Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. 2 Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

The scope of these verses is to show that when God is coming towards us in a way of mercy we must go forth to meet him in a way of duty.

I. God here tells us what are his intentions of mercy to us (v. 1): My salvation is near to come—the great salvation wrought out by Jesus Christ (for that was the salvation of which the prophets enquired and searched diligently, 1 Pet. i. 10), typified by the salvation of the Jews from Sennacherib or out of Babylon. Observe, 1. The gospel salvation is the salvation of the Lord. It was contrived and brought about by him; he glories in it as his. 2. In that salvation God's righteousness is revealed, which is so much the beauty of the gospel that St. Paul makes this the
ground of his glorying in it. (Rom. i. 17), because therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. The law revealed that righteousness of God by which all sinners stand condemned, but the gospel reveals that by which all believers stand acquitted. 3. The Old-Testament saints saw this salvation coming, and drawing near to them, long before it came; and they had notice by the prophets of its approach. As Daniel understood by Jeremiah's books the approach of the redemption out of Babylon, at the end of seventy years, so others understood by Daniel's books the approach of our redemption by Christ at the end of seventy weeks of years.

II. He tells us what are his expectations of duty from us, in consideration thereof. Say not, "We see the salvation near, and therefore we may live as we list, for there is no danger now of missing it or coming short of it;" that is turning the grace of God into wantonness. But, on the contrary, when the salvation is near double your guard against sin. Note, The fuller assurances God gives us of the performance of his promises the stronger obligations he lays us under to obedience. The salvation here spoken of has now come; yet, there being still a further salvation in view, the apostle presses duty upon us Christians with the same argument. Rom. iii. 11, Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. That which is here required to qualify and prepare us for the approaching salvation is,

1. That we be honest and just in all our dealings: Keep you judgment and do justice. Walk by rule, and make conscience of what you say and do, that you do no wrong to any. Render to all their dues exactly, and, in exacting what is due to you, keep up a court of equity in your own bosom, to moderate the rigours of the law. Be ruled by that golden rule, "Do as you would be done by." Magistrates must administer justice wisely and faithfully. This is required to evidence the sincerity of our faith and repentance, and to open the way of mercy. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. God is true to us; let us be so to one another.

2. That we religiously observe the sabbath day, v. 2. We are not just if we rob God of his time. Sabbath-sanctification is here put for all the duties of the first table, the fruits of our love to God, as justice and judgment are put for all those of the second table, the fruits of our love to our neighbour. Observe, (1.) The duty required, which is to keep the sabbath, to keep it as a talent we are to trade with, as a treasure we are entrusted with. "Keep it holy; keep it safe; keep it with care and caution; keep it from polluting it. Allow neither yourselves nor others either to violate the holy rest or omit the holy work of that day." If this be intended primarily for the Jews in Babylon, it was fit that they should be particularly put in mind of this, because when, by reason of their distance from the temple, they could not observe the other institutions of their law, yet they might distinguish themselves from the heathen by putting a difference between God's day and other days. But it being required more generally of man, and the son of man, it intimates that sabbath-sanctification should be a duty in gospel times, when the bounds of the church should be enlarged and other rites and ceremonies abolished. Observe, Those that would keep the sabbath from polluting it must put on resolution, must not only do this, but lay hold on it, for sabbath time is precious, but is very apt to slip away if we take not great care; and therefore we must lay hold on it and keep our hold, must do it and persevere in it. (2.) The encouragement we have to do this duty: Blessed is he that doeth
it. The way to have the blessing of God upon our employments all the week is to make conscience, and make a business, of sabbath-sanctification; and in doing so we shall be the better qualified to do judgment and justice. The more godliness the more honesty, 1 Tim. ii. 2.

3. That we have nothing to do with sin: Blessed is the man that keeps his hand from doing evil, any wrong to his neighbour, in body, goods, or good name—or, more generally, any thing that is displeasing to God and hurtful to his own soul. Note, The best evidence of our having kept the sabbath well will be a care to keep a good conscience all the week. By this it will appear that we have been in the mount with God if our faces shine in a holy conversation before men.

**Encouragement to the Sincere; Encouragement to the Gentiles. (b. c. 706.)**

3 Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. 4 For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; 5 Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. 6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; 7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. 8 The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.

The prophet is here, in God's name, encouraging those that were hearty in joining themselves to God and yet laboured under great discouragements. 1. Some were discouraged because they were not of the seed of Abraham. They had joined themselves to the Lord, and bound their souls with a bond to be his for ever (this is the root and life of religion, to break off from the world and the flesh, and devote ourselves entirely to the service and honour of God); but they questioned whether God would accept them, because they were of the sons of the stranger, v. 3. They were Gentiles, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel and aliens from the covenants of promise, and therefore feared they had no part nor lot in the matter. They said, "The Lord has utterly separated me from his people, and will not own me as one of them, nor admit me to their privileges." It was often said that there should be one law for the stranger and for him that was born in the land (Exod. xii. 49), and yet they came to this melancholy conclusion. Note, Unbelief often suggests things to the discouragement of good people which are directly contrary to what God himself has said, things which he has expressly guarded against. Let not the sons of the stranger therefore say thus, for they have no reason to say it. Note, Ministers must have answers ready for the disquieting fears and jealousies of weak Christians, which, how unreasonable soever, they must take notice of. 2. Others were discouraged because they were not fathers in Israel. The eunuch said, Behold, I am a dry tree. So he looked upon himself, and it was his grief; so others looked upon him, and it was his reproach. He was thought to be of no use because he had no children, nor was ever likely to have any. This
was then the more grievous because eunuchs were not admitted to be priests (Lev. xxi. 20), nor to enter into the congregation (Deut. xxiii. 1), and because the promise of a numerous posterity was the particular blessing of Israel and the more valuable because from among them the Messiah was to come. Yet God would not have the eunuchs to make the worst of their case, nor to think that they should be excluded from the gospel church, and from being spiritual priests, because they were shut out from the congregation of Israel and the Levitical priesthood; no, as the taking down of the partition wall, contained in ordinances, admitted the Gentiles, so it let in likewise those that had been kept out by ceremonial pollutions. Yet, by the reply here given to this suggestion, it should seem the chief thing which the eunuch laments in his case is his being written childless.

Now suitable encouragements are given to each of these.

I. To those who have no children of their own, who, though they had the honour to be the children of the church and the covenant themselves, yet had none to whom they might transmit that honour, none to receive the sign of circumcision and the privileges secured by that sign. Now observe,

1. What a good character they have, though they lie under this ignominy and affliction; and those only are entitled to the following comforts who in some measure answer to these characters. (1.) They keep God's sabbaths as he has appointed them to be kept. In the primitive times, if a Christian were asked, "Hast thou kept holy the Lord's day?" He would readily answer, "I am a Christian, and dare not do otherwise." (2.) In their whole conversation they choose those things that please God. They do that which is good; they do it with a sincere design to please God in it; they do it of choice, and with delight. If sometimes, through infirmity, they come short in doing that which pleases God, yet they choose it, they endeavour after it, and aim at it. Note, Whatever is God's pleasure should without dispute be our choice. (3.) They take hold of his covenant, and that is a thing that pleases God as much as any thing. The covenant of grace is proposed and proffered to us in the gospel; to take hold of it is to consent to it, to accept the offer and come up to the terms, deliberately and sincerely to take God to be to us a God and to give up ourselves to him to be to him a people. Taking hold of the covenant denotes an entire and resolute consent to it, taking hold as those that are afraid of coming short, catching at it as a good bargain, and as those that are resolved never to let it go, for it is our life: and we take hold of it as a criminal took hold of the horns of the altar to which he fled for refuge.

2. What a great deal of comfort they may have if they answer to this character, though they are not built up into families (v. 5): Unto them will I give a better place and name. It is supposed that there is a place and a name, which we have from sons and daughters, that is valuable and desirable. It is a pleasing notion we have that we live in our children when we are dead. But there is a better place, and a better name, which those have that are in covenant with God, and it is sufficient to counterbalance the want of the former. A place and a name denote rest and reputation; a place to live comfortably in themselves, and a name to live creditably with among their neighbours; they shall be happy, and may be easy both at home and abroad. Though they have not children to be the music of their house, or arrows in their quiver, to keep them in countenance when they speak
with their enemies in the gate, yet they shall have a place and a name more than equivalent. For, (1.) God will give it to them, will give it to them by promise; he will himself be both their habitation and their glory, their place and their name. (2.) He will give it to them in his house, and within his walls; there they shall have a place, shall be planted so as to take root (Ps. xcii. 13), shall dwell all the days of their life, Ps. xxvii. 4. They shall be at home in communion with God, as Anna, that departed not from the temple night nor day. There they shall have a name. A name for the good things with God and
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missing
good people, which is a name better than that of
sons and daughters. Our relation to God, our in-
terest in Christ, our title to the blessings of the co-
venant, and our hopes of eternal life, are things that
give us in God's house a blessed place and a blessed
name. [3.] It shall be an everlasting name, that
shall never be extinct, shall never be cut off; like
the place and name of angels, who therefore marry
not, because they die not. Spiritual blessings are
better than fleshly, and children shall be made
before them; for children are a certain care, and
may prove the greatest grief and shame of a man's
life, but the blessings we partake of in God's house,
are a sure and constant joy and honour, comforts
which cannot be imibbered.

2. To those that are themselves the children of
strangers,
(1.) It is here promised, that they shall now be
welcome to the church, v. 6, 7. When God's Is-
rael come out of Babylon, let them bring as many
of their neighbours along with them as they can
persuade to come, and God will find room enough
for them all in his house.
And here (as before) we may observe,
[1.] Upon what terms they shall be welcome; let
their enemies be Israel's friends. When they come
out of Babylon, will not be plagued, as they were
when they came out of Egypt, with a mixed mul-
titude, that went with them, but were not cordially
for them; no, the sons of the stranger shall have a
place and a name in God's house, provided, First,
that they forsee other gods, all rivals and pret-
tenders whatsoever, and join themselves to the
Lord, so as to become one spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 17. Sec-
condly, that they join themselves to him as sub-
jects to his prince, and soldiers to his general,
by an oath of fidelity and obedience, to serve him,
not occasionally, as one would serve a turn, but
to be constantly his servants, entirely subject to his
command, and devoted to his interest. Thirdly,
that they join themselves to him as friends to his
honour and the interests of his kingdom in the
world, to love the name of the Lord, to be well-
pleased with all the discoveries he has made of him-
self, and all the memorials they make of him.
Ob-
serve, Serving him and loving him go together, for
those that love him truly will serve him faithfully,
and that obedience is most acceptable to him, as
well as most pleasant to us, which flows from a
principle of love for then his commandments are
not grievous. Fourthly, that they keep the Sabbath
from polluting it; for the stranger that is within thy
gates, is particularly required to do that. Lastly,
that they take hold of the cova-
nent, that they come under the bonds of it, and put
up for the benefits of it.
[2.] To what privileges they shall be welcome,
7. Three things are here promised them in their coming to God. First, Assistance; I will bring them
into the door, not only bid them welcome, when they come, but incline them to come, will show them the way, and lead them in it." David himself prays, that God by his light and
truth would bring them to his holy hill, Ps. lxxii.
5. And the sons of the stranger shall be under the
same guidance. The church is God's holy hill, on
which he hath set his King, and in bringing the
heathens in, he shall bring in his own, to be the
house of Zion's King, as well as worshippers in Zion's
holy temple. Secondly, Acceptance; "Their burnt-offerings
and their sacrifices shall be accepted on mine altar,
and never the less acceptable for being theirs, though
they are sons of the stranger." The prayers and
praises (those spiritual sacrifices) of devout Gen-
tiles shall be as pleasing to God as those of the pious
Israel, and no difference shall be made between
them; for though they are Gentiles by birth, yet
through grace they shall be looked upon as the
believing seed of faithful Abraham, and the p-say-
ing seed of wrestling Jacob, for in Christ Jesus there
is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncirc-
umcision. Thirdly, Comforts; they shall not only
be accepted, but they themselves shall have the
pleasure of it, I will make them joyful in my house
of prayer. They shall have grace, not only to serve
God, but to serve him cheerfully and with
gladness, as being acceptable to him for the grace
acceptable to him; for when we sing in the ways
of the Lord, then great is the glory of our God. They
shall go away, and eat their bread with joy, because
God now accepts their works, Eccl. ix. 7. Nay,
though they come mourning to the house of prayer,
they shall go away rejoicing, for they shall there
find such case, by casting their cares and bur-
dens upon the Lord, and thus shall he comfort
that, like Hannah, they shall go away, and their
countenance shall be no more sad. Many a sor-
rowful spirit has been made joyful in the house of
prayer.
(2.) It is here promised, that multitudes of the
Gentiles shall come to the church; not only that the
few who come dropping in, shall be bid welcome,
but that great multitudes shall be thrown open to
them; My house shall be called
an house of prayer for all people. The temple
was then God's house, and to that Christ applies these
words; (Matth. xxi. 13.) but with an eye to it
as a type of the gospel-church, Heb. ix. 8, 9.
For Christ calls it his house, Heb. iii. 6. Now con-
cerning this house, it is promised, [1.] That it
shall not be a house of sacrifice, but a house of
prayer. The religious meetings of God's people
shall be meetings for prayer, in which they shall
join together, as a token of their united faith and
mutual love. [2.] That it shall be a house of
prayer, not for the people of the Jews only, but for
all people. This was fulfilled when Peter was
made, not only to perceive it himself, but to tell it
to the world, that in every nation, he that fears
God and works righteousness, is accepted of him,
Acts x. 33. It had been declared again and again
that the stranger that comes nigh shall be put to
death, but Gentiles shall now be looked upon no
longer as strangers and foreigners, Eph. ii. 19.
And it appears by Solomon's prayer at the dedica-
tion of the temple, both that it was primarily in-
tended for a house of prayer, and that strangers
should be welcomed in it, 1 Kings v. 5, 6, 8. 48.

And it is intimated here, (v. 8.) that when the
Gentiles are called in, they shall be incorporated
into one body with the Jews, that (as Christ says,
John x. 16.) there may be one fold and one Shep-
herd; for, First, God will gather the outcasts of Is-
rael; many of the Jews that had by their unbelie-
cast themselves out, shall by faith be brought in
again, and taken into the church, as the elec-
short, Hos. i. xi. 5. Christ came to the last sheep
of the house of Israel, (Matth. xv. 24.) to gather their
outcasts, (Ps. cxlvii. 2.) to restore their preserved,
(ch. xlix. 6.) and to be their Glory, Luke ii. 32.
Secondly, He will gather others also to him, be-
side his own outcasts that are gathered to him; or
though some of the Gentiles have come over now
and then into the church, the election is not to
be concluded (as many may think) to answer the extent of these
promises, no, there are still more and more to be
brought in; I will gather others to him beside these;
these are but the first-fruits, in comparison with the
harvest that shall be gathered for Christ in the na-
tions of the earth, when the fulness of the Gentiles
shall come in. Note, The church is a growing
body; when some are gathered to it, we may hope
there shall be still more, till the mystical body
may be completed. 'Other sheep I have.'
9. All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, yea, all ye beasts in the forest. 10. His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. 11. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand; they all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter. 12. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as to-day, and much more abundant.

From words of comfort the prophet here, by a very sudden change of his style, passes to words of reproof and conviction, and goes on in that strain, for the most part, in the three following chapters; and therefore some here begin a new sermon. He had assured the people, that in due time God would deliver them out of captivity, which was designed for the comfort of those that should live when God would do this. Now here he shows what their sins and provocations were, for which God would send them into captivity, and this was designed for the conviction of those that lived in his own time, near a hundred years before he came to judge them, and to bring up the measure of the nation's sin, and to justify God in what he brought upon them. God will lay them waste by the fierceness of their enemies, for the foolishness of their friends.

I. Desolating judgments are here summoned, v. 9. The sheep of God's pasture are now to be made the subject of wicked apprehensions, to be frozen with his ice, and therefore the beasts of the field and the forest are called to come and devour. They are beasts of prey, and do it from their own ravenous disposition; but God permits them to do it, nay, he employs them as his servants in doing it, the ministers of his justice, though they mean not so, neither does their heart think so. If this refers primarily to the descent made upon them by the Babylonians, and their devouring of them, yet it may look further, to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans, after these outcasts of them (mentioned v. 8.) were gathered into the Christian church. The Roman armies came upon them as beasts of the forest to devour them, and they quite took away their place and nation. Note, When God has designed to make use of his ministers for the destruction of his own sheep, he puts them in the hands of the beasts of prey within called, to be employed in doing it.

II. The reason of these judgments is here given. The shepherds who should have been the watchmen of the flock, to discover the approaches of the beasts of prey, to keep them off, and protect the sheep, were treacherous and careless, minded not their business, nor made any conscience of the trust reposed in them. They should have been an easy prey to the wild beasts. Now this may refer to the false prophets that lived in Isaiah's, Jeremiah's, and Ezekiel's time, that flattered the people in their wicked ways, and told them they should have peace, though they went on: it may also refer to the priests that bare rule by their means, or to the wise men, to the scribes of the Pharisees. All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's. Every one is for propagating his own opinion, advancing his own party, raising his own family, and having every thing to his own mind, while the common concerns of the public are wretchedly neglected and postponed. They look every where for his gain from his quarter, for his hand or favor. All part of the work, they are for gain from every quarter, Rem, rem, quocunque modo rem—Money, money, by fair means, or by foul, we must have money, but especially from their own quarter, where they will be sure to take care that they lose nothing, nor miss any thing that is to be got. If any one put not into their mouths, they not only will do him no service, but they fire and war against him, Micah iii. 5.

the nation's watchmen in our Saviour's time, the chief priests and the scribes who should have discerned the signs of the times, and have given notice to the people of the approach of the Messiah, but who, instead of that, opposed him, and did all they could to keep people from coming to the knowledge of him, and to prejudice them against him. It is a very sad character that is here given of these watchmen; we unto thee, O land, when thy guides are such. 1. They had no sense or knowledge of their business; they were wretchedly ignorant of their work, and very unfit to teach, being so ill-taught themselves. His watchmen are blind, and therefore utterly unfit to be watchmen. If God's servants are not blind, who shall see for us? If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness! Christ describes the Pharisees to be blind leaders of the blind, Matth. xv. 14. The beasts of the field come to devour, and the watchmen are blind, and are not aware of them. They are all ignorant, (v. 10.) shepherds that cannot understand, (v. 12.) that know not what is to be done about the sheep, nor can feed them with understanding, Jer. iii. 15.

2. What little knowledge they had, they made no use of it, no one was the better for it. As they were blind watchmen, that could not discern the danger, so they were dumb dogs, that would not give the warning. And why are the dogs set to guard the shepherds, if they are not to warn the shepherd, and frighten the wolf? Such were these; they that had the charge of souls never reproved men for their faults, nor told them what would be in the end thereof, never gave them notice of the judgments of God that were breaking in upon them; they barked at God's prophets, and bit them too, like a savage sheep, but made no opposition to the wolf or thief.

3. They were very lazy, and would take no pains; they loved their ease, and hated business, were always sleeping, lying down, and loving to slumber. They were not overcome, and overpowered by sleep, as the disciples, through grief and fatigue, but they lay down on purpose to invite sleep; and said, Soul, take thine ease. Yet a little sleep. It is bad with a people when their shepherds slumber, (Nah. iii. 18.) and it is well for God's people, that their Shepherd, the Keeper of Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps.

4. They were very covetous and eager after the world, greedy dogs, that can never have enough; if they had ever so much, they would think it too little; they were loved silver as never to be satisfied with silver, Eccl. v. 10. All their inquiry is, what they shall get, not what they shall do. Let them have the wages, and they care not whether the work be done or no; they feed not the flock, but fleece it. They are every one looking to his own way, minding his own private interests, and have no regard at all to the public welfare; it was St. Paul's complaint of the Corinthians, that they were very covetous. All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's. Every one is for propagating his own opinion, advancing his own party, raising his own family, and having every thing to his own mind, while the common concerns of the public are wretchedly neglected and postponed. They look every where for his gain from his quarter, for his hand or favor. All part of the work, they are for gain from every quarter, Rem, rem, quocunque modo rem—Money, money, by fair means, or by foul, we must have money, but especially from their own quarter, where they will be sure to take care that they lose nothing, nor miss any thing that is to be got. If any one put not into their mouths, they not only will do him no service, but they fire and war against him, Micah iii. 5.
5. They were perfect epurses, given to their pleasures, never so much in their element as in their drunken revels; (v. 12.) Come ye, (say they,) I will fetch wine; (they have that at command, their cellars are better furnished than their closets;) and we will fill ourselves, or be drunk with a strong drink. They say, they were often drunk, not overseen, (as we say,) or overtaken, in drink, but designedly. The watchmen did thus invite and encourage one another to drink to excess, or they counted the people to sit and drink with them, and so confirmed them in their wicked ways, and hardened their hearts, whom they should have reproved. How could they think it any harm to be drunk, when the watchmen themselves joined with them, and led them to it?

6. They were secure, and confident of the continuance of their prosperity and ease; they said, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant; we shall have as much to spend upon our lusts to-morrow, as we have to-day." They had no thought at all of their own frailty and mortality, though they were shortening their days, and hastening their deaths, by their excesses. They had no dread of the judgments of God, though they were daily provoking him, and making themselves liable to his wrath and curse. They never considered the uncertainty of all the delights and enjoyments of sense, how they perish in the using, and pass away with the lusts of them. They resolved to continue in this world good men, whenever their consciences said to the contrary, to be as merry to-morrow as they are to-day. But boast not thyself of to-morrow, when perhaps this night thy soul shall be required of thee.

CHAP. LVII.

The prophet, in this chapter, makes his observations, I. Upon the deaths of good men, comforting those that were taken away in their integrity, and reproving those that did not make a due improvement of such providences, v. 1, 2. II. Upon the gross idolatries and spiritual whoredoms which the Jews were guilty of, and the destroying judgments they were thereby bringing upon themselves, v. 3., 12. III. Upon the gracious returns of God to his people to put an end to their captivity, and re-establish their prosperity, v. 18., 21.

1. The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. 2. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.

The prophet, in the close of the foregoing chapter, had condemned the watchmen for their ignorance and sottishness; here he shows the general stupidity and senselessness of the people likewise; no wonder they were not considerable, when their watchmen were so, who should have awakened them to consideration. We may observe here,

1. The providence of God removing good men space out of this world. The righteous, as to this world, perish, they are gone, and their place knows them no more; pitiful exempths none from the arrests of death, nay, in persecuting times, the most righteous are most exposed to the violences of bloody malice and bloody meditations. Righteousness delivers from the sting of death, but not from the stroke of it. They are said to perish, because they are utterly removed from us, and to express the great loss which this world sustains by the removal of them; not that their death is their undoing, but it often proves an undoing to the places where they lived, and were useful. Nay, even merciful men are taken away, those good men that are distinguished from the righteous for whom some would even dare to die, Rom. v. 7. Those are often removed, that could be worst spared; the fruitful trees are cut down by death, and the barren left toumber the ground. Merciful men are often taken away by the hand of men's malice; many good works they have done, and for some of them they are stoned. Before the captivity in Babylon perhaps there was a more than ordinary mortality of good men, so that there were scarcely any left, Jer. v. 1. The godly ceased, and the faithful failed, Ps. xii. 1.

2. The careless world slighting these providences, and disregarding them—no man lays it to heart, none considers it. There are very few that lament it as a public loss, very few that take notice of it as a public warning. The death of good men is a thing to be laid to heart, and considered, more than common deaths. Serious inquires ought to be made: Wherefore does God contend with us? What good lessons are to be learned by such providences? What may we do to help to make up the breach, and to fill up the room of those that are removed? God is justly displeased when such events are not laid to heart; when the voice of the rod is not heard, nor the intentions of it answered, much more when it is rejoiced in, as the slaying of the witnesses is, Rev. x. 10. Some of God's choicest blessings to a people in a wicked condition are often undervalued; and it is an evidence of very great incogitancy; little children, when they are little, least lament the death of their parents, because they know not what a loss it is to them.

3. The happiness of the righteous in their removal.

1. They are taken away from the evil to come, then when it is just coming. [1.] In compassion to them, that they may not see the evil, (2 Kings xxii. 20.) nor share in it, nor be in temptation by it. When the deluge is coming, they are called into the ark, and have a hiding-place and rest in heaven, when there was none for them under heaven. [2.] In wrath to the world, to punish them for all the injuries they have done to the righteous and merciful ones; these are taken away, that stood in the gap to turn away the judgments of God; and then what can be expected but a deluge of them? It is a sign that God intends war, when he calls home his ambassadors.

2. They go to be easy, out of the reach of that evil. The righteous man, who, while he lived, walked in his uprightness, enters, when he dies, into peace, and rests in his bed. Note, [1.] Death is gain, and rest, and bliss, to those only who walked in their uprightness, and who, when they die, can appeal to God concerning it, as Hezekiah, (2 Kings xx. 3.) Now, Lord, remember it. [2.] They that practised uprightness and persevered in it to the end, shall find it well with them when they die. Their souls then enter into peace, into the world of peace, when in their bed of ease and happiness; where there is no trouble; Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Their bodies rest in their beds. Note, The grave is a bed of rest to all the Lord's people; there they rest from all their labours, Rev. xiv. 13. And the more weary they were, the more welcome will that rest be to them, Job iii. 17. This bed is made in the darkness, but that makes it the more quiet; it is a bed out of which they shall rise refreshed in the morning of the resurrection.

3. But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore. 4. Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide
mouth, and draw out the tongue! are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood? 5. Inflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the chisels of the rocks! 6. Among the smooth stones of the stream is thy portion; they, they are thy lot; even to them hast thou poured a drink-offering, thou hast offered a meat-offering. Should I receive comfort in these? 7. Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed: even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice.

8. Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance; for thou hast discovered thyself to another than me, and art gone up: thou hast enlarged thy bed, and made a covenant with them; thou lovedst their bed where thou sawedst it. 9. And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell. 10. Thou art weary in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thy hand; therefore thou wast not grieved. 11. And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast hasted, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not? 12. I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee.

We have here a high charge, but a just one, no doubt, drawn up against that wicked generation, out of which God's righteous ones were removed, because the world was not worthy of them. Observe,

I. The general character here given of them, or the name and title by which they stand indicted, v. 3. They are bid to draw near, and hear the charge, are set to the bar and arraigned there as sons of the sorceress, or of a witch, the seed of an adulterer and adulteress; that is, they were so strongly inclined to be such, and their ancestors were such before them. Sin is sorcery and adultery, for it is departing from God, and dealing with the devil; and they were children of disobedience; "Come," says the prophet, "draw near hither, and I will read you your doom; to the righteous death will bring peace and rest, but to you, thou child of falsehood, there is a seed of falsehood, (v. 4.) that have it by kied, and have it woven into your very nature, to backslide from God, and to deal treacherously with him," (ch. xlviii. 8.)

II. The particular crimes laid to their charge.

1. Scoffing at God and his word. They were a generation of scorner; (v. 4.) Against whom do you sport yourselves? You think it is only against the poor prophets, whom you trample upon as contemptible men, but really it is against God himself, who sends them, and whose message they deliver." Mocking the messengers of the Lord was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin, for what was done to them God took as done to himself. When they were reproved for their sins, and threatened with the judgments of God, they ridiculed the word of God with the rudest and most indecent gestures and expressions of disdain. They sported themselves and made themselves merry with that which should have made them serious, and under which they should have humbled themselves. They made weary months at the prophets, and drew out the tongue, contrary to all the laws of good breeding; nor did they treat God's prophets with the common civility with which they would have treated a gentleman's servant that had been sent to them on an errand. Note, Those who mock at God, and bid defiance to his judgments, had best consider who it is toward whom they carry it so insolently.

2. Idolatry. This was that sin of which the people of the Jews were most notoriously guilty of before the captivity: but that affliction cured them of it. In Isaiah's time it abounded, witness the abominable idolatries of Ahaz (which some think are particularly referred to here) and of Manasseh. (1.) They were dotingly fond of their idols, were inflamed with them, as those that burn in unlawful, unnatural lusts, Rom. 1. 27. They were mad upon their idols, Jer. 1. 38. They inflamed themselves with them by their violent passions in the worship of them, as those of Baal's prophets that leaped upon the altar, and cut themselves, 1 Kings xviii. 26. 28. Note, Vile corruptions, the more they are gratified, the more they are inflamed. They worshipped their idols under every green tree, in the open air, and in the shade; yet that did not cool the heat of their impious lusts, but the charming beauty of the green trees made them the more fond of their idols which they worshipped there. Thus that in nature which is pleasing, instead of drawing them to the God of nature, drew them from him. The flame of their zeal in the worship of false gods, may shame us for our coldness and indifference in the worship of the true God. It is a great shame and sin to deride and darkened ourselves.

(2.) They were barbarous and unnatural cruel in the worship of their idols; they slew their children, and offered them in sacrifice to their idols, not only in the valley of the son of Hinnom, the head-quarters of that monstrous idolatry, but in other valleys, in imitation of that, and under the clefts of the rock, in dark and solitary places, the fittest for such works of darkness. (3.) They were abundant and insatiable in their idolatries; they never thought they could have idols enough, nor could spend enough upon them, and do enough in their service. The Syrians had once a notion of the God of Israel, that he was a God of the hills, but not a God of the valleys; (1 Kings xx. 28.) but these idolaters, to make some work, had two.

1. They had gods of the valleys, which they worshipped in the low places by the water side; (v. 6.) Among the smooth stones of the valley, or brook, is thy portion. If they saw a smooth carved stone, though set up but for a way-mark, or a mere stone, they were ready to worship it, as the papists do crosses. Or, in stony valleys they set up their gods, which the people of their Lot and Portion, might as easily set up their gods, or as God's people take them for their Lot and Portion. But these gods of stone would really be no better a portion for them, no better a lot, than the smooth stones of the stream, near which they were set up, for sometimes they worshipped their rivers; "They, they are thy lot which thoutrustest to, and art pleased with, but thou shalt be put off with it for thy lot, and a more available place for the folly of sinners, who take the smooth stones of the stream for their portion, when they might have the precious stones of God's Jerusalem, and the High Priest's ephod, to portion themselves with. Having taken these idols for their lot and portion, they refuse on charge in doing honour to them: To them hast thou poured a drink-offering, and offered a meat-offering, as if they had given thee thy meat.
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and drink." They loved their idols better than their children, for their own tables must be robbed, to replenish the altars of their idols. Have we taken the true God for our Portion? Is he, even lie, our Lot? Let us then serve him with our meat and drink, not as they did, by deprivings ourselves of the use of them, but by eating and drinking to his glory. Here, in a parenthesis, comes in an expression of God's just resentment of this wickedness of theirs. Shall we then go about with such people as this? Can they expect that God would take any pleasure in them, or accept their deviations at his altar, who thus serve Baal with the gifts of his providence? God takes comfort in his people, while they are faithful to him; but what comfort can he take in them, when they should be his witnesses against the idolatries of the world, do themselves fall in with them? Should I have compassion on these? (so some); Should I rebuke these? (so others.) "How can they expect that I should spare them, and either adjourn or abate their punishment, when they are so very provoking? Shall I not visit for these things?" Jer. v. 7, 9.

[2.] They had gods of the hills too; (v. 7.) "Upon a lofty and high mountain (as if thou wouldst vie with the high God of thy self; One himself, v. 15.) hast thou set up a tabernacle, this idolatry of thine, this altar, the bed of thine uncleanness, wherein thou comittest spiritual whoredom, with all the wantanments of an idolatrous fancy, and in direct violation of the covenant of thy God. Thither wnestest thou up readyly enough, though it was up-hill, to offer sacrifice." Some think this bespeaks the impudence they arrived at in their idolatries; at first they had sense of shame, when they worshipped idols in the valleys, in obscure places; but they soon conquered that, and came to do it upon the lofty, high mountains; they were not ashamed, neither could they blush.

[3.] As if these were not enough, they had household-gods too, their lares and penates. Behind the doors and the posts, (v. 8.) where the law of God should be written for a memorandum to them of their duty, they set up the remembrance of their idols, not so much to keep up their own remembrance of them, (they were so fond of them, that they could not forget them,) but to show others how mindful they were of them, and to put their children in mind of them, and possess them betimes with a veneration for these dunghill-deities.

[4.] As they were 항상 in their idolatries, so they were licentious in them from them; they hardness in their wickedness, they worshipped their idols openly and in public view, as being neither ashamed of the sin, nor afraid of the punishment; they went as publicly, and in as great crowds, to the idol-temples, as ever they had gone to God's house. This was like an impudent harlot, discovering themselves, to another, and not to God, making a profession of a faith, and a love not of the true. They took a pride in making proselytes to their idolatries, and not only went up themselves to their high places, but enlarged their bed, their idol-temples, and (as the margin reads the following words) thou wasted it for thyself larger than theirs, than theirs from whom thou copiedst it, and tookest the platform of it, as Ahaz of his altar from that which he saw at Damascus. First part of their wickedness was, that they were so mischievous over head and ears, as it were, in their idolatries, there is no parting them from them. Ephraim is now joined to idols both in love and league. First, In league; "Thou hast made a covenant with them, with the idols, with the idol-worshippers, to live and die together. This was a complete renunciation of their covenant with God, and an avowed resolution to persist in their apostasy from him. Secondly, In love; "Thou lovedst their bed, the temple of an idol, wherever thou sawest it." Justly therefore were they given up to their own hearts' lusts.

3. Another sin charged upon them is, their trusting in, and seeking to, foreign aids and succours, and contracting a communion with the Gentile powers; (v. 9.) "Thou wnestest to the king, which some understand of the idol they worshipped, particularly Mabuch, which signifies a king; Thou didst every one of you go to ingratiate thyself with some idols, do officious courtesies to them, or offer ointments at their altars." Or, it may be meant of the king of Assyria, whom Ahaz made his court to; or, of the king of Babylon, whose ambassadors Hezekiah caressed; or, of the other kings of the nations whose idolatrous usages they admired, and were desirous to learn and imitate, and, for that end, went and sent to cultivate an acquaintance and correspondence with them, that they might be drawn thereby, or by an alliance with them. See here, (1.) What an expense they were at in forming and procuring this grand alliance; they went with ointments and perfumes, either bestowed upon themselves, to beautify their own faces, and to make themselves considerable, and worthy the friendship of the greatest king; or, to be presented to those whose favour they were desirous to obtain from them, and he, and brings him before great men; "When the first present of rich perfumes was thought too little, thou didst increase them;" and thus many seek the ruler's favour, forgetting that, after all, every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord. So fond were they of those heathen princes, that they not only went themselves, in all their airs, to those that were far off, but sent messengers to those that were in the most remote parts, and forsook the Lord and his covenant, and took themselves off, far off, ch. xviii. 2. (2.) How much they hereby disparaged themselves, and laid the honour of their own crowns and nation in the dust; Thou didst debase thys- self even unto hell. They did so by their idolatries. It is a dishonour to the children of men, who are ended with the powers of reason, to worship that as their god, which is the creature of their own fancy, and the work of their own hands, to bow down to the stock of a tree. It is much more a dishonour to the children of God, who are blessed with the privilege of divine revelation, to forsake such a God as they know theirs to be, for a thing of naught, their own mercies for lying vanities. They likewise debase themselves by truckling to their heathen neighbours, and depending upon them, when they had a God to go to, who is all-sufficient, and in covenant with them, and with his people, that they may come to the highest degree, and sink themselves to the lowest, that forsook the Fountain of life for broken cisterns, and the Rock of ages for broken reeds. Note, Sinners disparage and debase themselves; the service of sin is an ignominious slavery; and they who thus debase themselves to hell, will justly have their portion there.

III. The destruction of their sin:

1. They had been tired with disappointments in their wicked courses, and yet they would not be convinced of the folly of them; (v. 10.) "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; thou hast undertaken a mighty task, to find out true satisfaction and happiness in that which is vanity and a lie." Those that set up idols, instead of God, for the object of their hope and confidence, and think thus to better themselves, and make themselves easy, go a great way about, and will never come to their journey's end; Thou art wearied in the multitude, or multitude, of thy ways; so some read it; those that forsake the only right way, wander endlessly in a thousand by-paths, and lose themselves in the many inventions which they have sought out; they weary themselves with fresh chases, and}
one; but never gain their point, like the Sodmites, that swerved themselves to find the door, (Gen. xix. 11) and could not find it at last. The pleasures of sin will soon suffer, but never satisfy; a man may quickly tire himself in the pursuit of them, but can never repose himself in the enjoyment of them. They found this by experience; the idols they had often worshipped never did them any kindness, the kings they courted distressed them, and helped them no further. And they were theretofore besetted, that they could not say, "There is no hope; it is in vain any longer to expect that satisfaction in creature-confidence, and in the worship of idols, which we have so often looked for, and never met with." Note, Despair of happiness in the creature, and of satisfaction in the service of sin, is the first step towards a call-witted hope of happiness in God, and a well-fixed resolution to keep to his service: and those are inexorable, who have had a sensible conviction of the vanity of the creature, and yet will not be brought to say, "There is no hope to be happy short of the Creator."

2. Though they were convinced that the way they were in was a sinful way, yet, because they had found some happiness in it, and seemed to be well profited by it, they could not persuade themselves to be sorry for it; "Thou hast found the life of thy hand," (or, the living of it;) "Thou hastest how fortune smiles upon thee, and therefore thou art not grieved, any more than Ephraim, when he said, (Hos. xii. 8;) 'I am become rich, I have found me out substance.' Note, Prosperity in sin is a great bar to conviction and repentance. The sinner, in all their sinful pleasures, and raise estates by their sinful projects, are tempted to think God favours them, and therefore they have nothing to repent of. Some read it ironically, or by way of question, "Thou hast found the life of thy hand, hast found true satisfaction and happiness, no doubt, thou hast; hast thou not? And therefore thou art so far from being grieved, that thou blessest thyself in thine own evil way; but review thy gains once more, and come to a balance of profit and loss, and then say, What fruit hast thou of those things whereof thou art ashamed, and for which God shall bring thee into judgment?" Rom. vi. 21.

3. They had dealt very unworthily with God by their sin; for, (1.) It should seem they pretended that they did it to please God. They began because he was too terrible a majesty for them to deal with; they must have gods that they could be more free and familiar with; "But," says God, "of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied; that thou hast dealt falsely and treacherously with me, and dissembled in thy covenants with me and prayers to me! What did I ever do to frighten thee from me? What occasion have I given they stand in no hardy of me, that thou hast gone to seek a kinder master?" (2.) However, it is certain that they had no true reverence of God, nor any awful regard to him. So that question is commonly understood. "Of whom hast thou been afraid, or feared? Of none; for thou hast not feared me whom thou shouldst fear; for thou hast lied to me." Those that dissemble, and yet live as if they gave they stand in no knew of him. "Thou hast not remembered me, neither what I have said, nor what I have done, neither the promises, nor the threatenings, nor the performances of either; thou hast not laid them to thy heart, as thou wouldest have done, if thou hadst feared me." Note, Those who lay not the word of God and great promises to their heart, show that they have not the fear of God before their eyes. And multitudes are ruined by fearlessness, forgetfulness, and mere carelessness; they do not artight, nor good purpose fear any thing, remember any thing, or lay any thing to heart. Nay, (3.) They were hardened in their sin by the patience and forbearance of God; "Have not I held my peace of old, and for a long time? These things hast thou done, and I kept silence. And therefore, as it follows here, thou fearest me not;" as if because God had spared long, he would never punish, Eccl. viii. 11. Because he kept silence, the sinner thought him altogether such a one as himself, and stood in no awe of him.

Lastly, Here is God's resolution to call them to an account, though he had long borne with them; (v. 12.) I will declare; like that, (Ps. l. 21.) "but I will require thee, I will declare thy righteousness, which thou makest thy boast of, and let the world see, and thyself too, to thy confusion, that it is all a sham, all a cheat, it is not what it pretends to be. When the righteousness comes to be examined, it will be found unrighteousness; and that there is no sincerity in all thy pretensions. I will declare thy works, what they have been, and what the gain thou pretendest to have gotten by them, and it will appear that at long run they shall not profit thee, nor turn to any account." Note, Sinful works, as they are works of darkness, and there is no reason or rightness in them to pretend to, so there is nothing got by them; and however they look now, it will be made to appear so another day. Sin profits not, nay, it ruins and destroys.

13. When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee: but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain; 14. And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare, the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people. 15. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place: with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. 16. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. Here. 1. God shows how insufficient idols and creatures were to relieve and succour those that worshipped them, and confided in them; (v. 13.) "When thou criest in thy distress and anguish, lamentest thy misery, and callest for help, let thy companies deliver thee, the idol-gods which thou hast heaped to thyself companies of, the troops of the confederate forces which thou hast relied so much upon, let them deliver thee if they can; expect no other relief than what they can give." Thus God said to Israel, when in their trouble they called upon him, (Judg. x. 14.) Go, and cry to the gods which you have chosen, let them save you. But in vain is salvation hoped for from them, the wind shall carry them all away, the wind of God's wrath, the breath of his mouth, which shall slay the wicked; they have made themselves as chaff, and therefore the wind will of course hurry them away. Vanity they are, and vanity shall take them away, to vanity they shall be reduced, and vanity shall be their recom pense. Both the idols and their worshippers shall come to nothing. II. He shows that there was a sufficiency, an all-sufficiency, in him for the comfort and deliverance of all those that put their confidence in him, and
made their application to him. Their safety and satisfaction appear the more comfortable, because their hopes are crowned with fruition, when those that seek to other helpers have their hopes frustrated; 1. He that puts his trust in me, and in me only, he shall be happy, both for soul and body, for this will be their end. The Lord and their God. They that trust in God's providence take the best course to secure their secular interests; they shall possess the land, as much of it as is good for them, and what they have, they shall have it from a good hand, and hold it by a good title; (Ps. xxxvii. 3.) They shall dwell in the land, and verity they shall be fed. 2. They that trust in God's grace take the best course to secure their spiritual interests; they shall inherit mercy, God's house, fountain. They shall enjoy the privileges of the church on earth, and be brought at length to the joys of heaven; and no wind shall carry them away.

More particularly,

(1.) The captives that trust in God, shall be released; (v. 14.) They shall say, the messengers of his word, and all the ministers of his providence, in that great event shall say, cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way. When God's time is come, and their deliverance, the way of bringing it about shall be made plain and easy, obstacles shall be removed, difficulties that seemed insuperable shall be speedily got over, and all things shall concur both to accelerate and facilitate their rise. See ch. 3, 4, 5. This refers to the provision which the gospel, and the grace of it, shall make that shall break open the way through the mountains and hills, Isaiah viii. 20. But here God shows that those who may expect help from him, are such as are destitute of, and set themselves at a distance from, the gaities of the world, and the delights of sense. God's glory appears here very bright.

[1.] In his greatness and majesty; he is the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity. Let this possess us with very high and honourable thoughts of the majesty of this Lord who has been to us, and in whose name we are senn. His grace, and him. First, his being and perfections are exalted infinitely above every creature, not only above what they have themselves, but above what they can conceive concerning him, far above all their blessing and praise, Nah. ix. 5. He is the high and lofty One, and there is no creature like him, nor any to be compared with him. It speaks likewise his sovereign dominion over all, and the incontestable right he has to give both law and judgment to all: he is higher than the highest, (Eccles. v. 8.) than the highest heavens, Ps. cxiii. 4. Secondly, That with him there is neither beginning of days, nor end of life, nor change of time; he is both immortal and immutablc, he only has immortality, 1 Tim. vi. 16. He has it of himself, and he has it constantly, he inhabits it, and cannot be dispossessed of it. We must at once remove into eternity, but God always inhabits it. Thirdly, That there is an infinite rectitude in his nature, an exact conformity with himself, and a steady design of his own glory, in all that he does; and this appears in every thing by which he has made himself known, for his name is Holy, and all that desire to be acquainted with him, must know him as a holy God. Fourthly, That the peculiar residence and discovery of his glory are in the mansions of light and bliss above; "I dwell in the high and holy place, and will have all the world to know it." Whoever have any business with God must direct to him as their Father in heaven, for there he dwells. These great things are here said of God, to possess us with a holy reverence of him, to encourage our confidence in him, and to magnify his compassion and condescension to us; that though he is thus high, yet he has respect unto the lowly; he that rides on the heavens by his name J.H., stoops beneath the burden of himself for poor widows and fatherless. Ps. lxviii. 4, 5.

[2.] In his grace and mercy; he has a tender pity for the humble and contrite, for those that are so in respect of their state; if they be his people, he will not overlook them, though they are poor and low in the world, and despised and trampled upon by men. But it refers to the temper of their mind; he will not overlook them, though they be of a base estate, and in affliction, accommodate themselves to their affliction, and bring their mind to their condition, he is ever so low, and ever so sad and sorely broken, those that are truly penitent for sin, and mourn in secret for it, and have a dread of the wrath of God, which they have made themselves obnoxious to, and are submissive under all his rebukes. Now, First, With these God will dwell; he will visit them graciously, will converse familiarly with them by his word and spirit, as a man does with those of his own family; he will be always nigh to them, and present with them; that he dwells in the highest heavens, dwells in the lowest hearts, and inhabits sincerity as surely as he inhabits eternity; in these he delights. Secondly, He will revive their heart in his spirit with them, and make the lowest of them, by the word and Spirit of his grace, which will be reviving to them, as a cordial to one that is ready to faint. He will give them reviving joys and hopes, sufficient to balance all the griefs and fears that break their spirits. He dwells with them, and his presence is renewing.

(5.) Those he contends with, if they trust in him, shall be released, and received into favor under him. He will revive the heart of the contrite ones, for he will not contend for ever. Nothing makes a soul so contrite as God's contending, and therefore nothing revives it so as his ceasing his controversy. Here is, [1.] A gracious promise. It is not promised that he will never he angry with his people, for their sins are displeasing to him, or that he will never contend with them, or that they must expect the best; but he will not contend for ever; he will not turn away his eyes from them. As he is not soon angry, so he is not long angry; he will not always chide. Though he contend with them by convictions of sin, he will not contend for ever, but, instead of the spirit of bondage, they shall receive the Spirit of adoption; he has torn, but he will heal; though he contend with them by the remonstrances of providence, yet the correction shall not last long, shall last no longer than there is need, (1 Pet. i. 6.) no longer than they can bear, and no longer than till it has done its work. Though their whole life be calamitous, yet their end will be peace, and so will their eternity be. [2.] A very compassionate consideration, upon which this promise is grounded; "If I should contend for ever, the spirit would fail before me, even the souls which I have made." Now, First, God is the Father of spirits; (Heb. xii. 9.) it is the soul that he has made, that he gave being to by creation, and a new being to by regeneration. Secondly, Though the Lord is for the body, yet he concerns himself chiefly for the souls of his people, that the spirit do not fall, and its graces and comforts. Thirdly, The Father is at all times near the low, the spirit even of good men is apt to fall; they are tempted to entertain hard thoughts of God, to think it in vain to serve him; they are ready to put comfort away from them, and to despair of relief, and then the spirit fails. Fourthly, It is in consideration of this, that God will not contend for ever; for he will not
forsake the work of his own hands, nor defeat the purchase of his Son's blood. The reason is taken not from our merit, but from our weakness and infirmity; for he remembers that we are flesh, (Ps. lxxviii. 39.) and the flesh is weak.

17. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. 18. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. 19. I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace, to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him.

20. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. 21. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

The body of the people of Israel, in this account of God's dealings with them, is spoken of as a particular person, (v. 17, 18.) but divided into two sorts, differently dealt with; some who were sons of peace, to whom peace is spoken, (v. 19.) and others who were not, who have nothing to do with peace, v. 20, 21. Observe here,

1. The just rebukes which that people were brought under for their sin; For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him. Covetousness was a sin that abounded very much among that people; (Jer. vi. 13.) From the least to the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness.

Those that did not worship images, were yet carried away by this spiritual idolatry; for covetousness is such, it is making money the god, Col. iii. 5. No marvel that the people were covetous, when their covetousness themselves were notoriously so, ch. i. 11. Yet, covetous as they were, in the service of their idols they were prodigal, v. 6. And it is hard to say, whether their profusion in that, or their covetousness in every thing else, was more provoking. But for this iniquity, among others, God was angry with them, and brought one judgment after another upon them, and their destruction at last by the Chaldeans, was the fruit of it. But he rejected it, took it very ill, that a people who were devoted to himself, and portioned in himself, should be so entirely given up to the world, and choose that for their portion. Note, Covetousness is an iniquity that is very displeasing to the God of heaven. It is heart-sin, but he sees it, and therefore hates it, and looks upon it with jealousy, because it sets up a rival with him, and with his soul. In a word, which men bless themselves in, (Ps. xlix. 18.) and in which their neighbours bless them; (Ps. x. 3.) but God abhors it.

2. He smote him, reproved him for it by his prophets, corrected him by his providence, punished him in those very things he so doted upon, and was covetous of. Note, Sinners shall be made to feel the anger of God; whom he is wroth with he smites; and covetousness particularly lays men under the tokens of God's displeasure. They that set their hearts upon the wealth of this world are disappointed of it, or it is embittered to them; it is either clogged with a cross, or turned into a curse.

3. God hid himself from him when he was under these rebukes; and continued wroth with him. When we are under the rod, if God manifests himself to us, we may hear it the better; but if he both smite us and hide himself from us, send us no prophets, speak to us no comfortable word, show us no token for good, if he fear and go away, (Hos. v. 14.) we are very miserable.

11. Their obstinacy and incorrigibility under these rebukes: He went on frowardly in the way of his heart, in his evil way. He was not sensible of the displeasure of God that he was under; he felt the smart of the rod, but had no regard at all to the hand; the more he was crossed in his worldly pursuits, the more eager he was in them. He either would not see his error, or, if he saw it, would not amend it. Observe, It was not the smartness of his heart, it was what he was inclined to, and inwardly set upon; and he would not be reclaimed, but in his distress he transgressed yet more, 2 Chron. xxxviii. 22. See the strength of the corruption of men's hearts, and the sinfulness of sin; it will take its course, in despite of God himself and all the flames of his wrath. See also how insufficient affections of themselves are to reform men out of God's grace work with them.

11. God's wonderful return in mercy to the people, notwithstanding the obstinacy of the generality of them. The greater part of them went on frowardly, but there were some among them that were mourners for the obstinacy of the rest; with an eye to them, or rather, for his own name's sake, God determines not to contend for ever with them. With the froward God may justly contend, (Ps. xlvii.) and walk contrary to those that walk contrary to him, Lev. xxvi. 24. When this sinner here went on frowardly in the way of his heart, one would think it should have followed, "I have seen his ways, and will destroy him, will abandon him, will never have anything more to do with him." But such are the riches of divine mercy and grace, that God can so do, and with such a sight of what God knew it would bring about, it would, he foresaw, he saw; God knew how bad the people were, and yet would not cast them off. But observe the method; God will first give him grace, and then, and not till then, give him peace; "I have seen his ways, that he will never turn to me of himself, and therefore I will turn him." Those whom God has mercy in store for, he has grace in readiness for, to prepare and qualify them for the reception and enjoyment of it, no matter how fast as fast as they could. 1. God will heal him of his corrupt and vicious disposition, will cure him of his covetousness, though it be ever so deeply rooted in him, and his heart have been long exercised to covetous practices. There is no spiritual disease so inwetrate, but almighty grace can conquer it. 2. God will heal him also; not only amend what was wrong in him, but he may cease to do evil, but direct him into the way of duty, that he may learn to do well. He goes on frowardly, as Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter, but God will lead him into a better mind, a better path. And then, 3. He will restore those comfort to him, which he had forfeited and lost, and for the return of which he had thus prepared him. There was a wonderful reformation wrought upon them, which brought comfort to them, to their mourners, to those among them that mourned for their own sins, the sins of their people, and the desolations of the sanctuary. To those mourners the mercy would be most comfortable, and to those that had an eye on working it out. Blessed are they that mourn, for to them comfort belongeth, and they shall have it.

Now, as when that people went into captivity, some of them were good fags, very good, others of them bad fags, very bad, and, accordingly, their
The prophet, in this chapter, has his commission and charge renewed, to reprove the sinners in Zion, particularly the hypocrites, to show them their transgressions, v. 1. It is intended for admonition and warning to all the hypocrites, and is not to be confined to those of any one age, since it particularly concerns those at that time when Isaiah prophesied; see ch. xxxiii. 14.—xxix. 13. Others to the captives in Babylon, the wicked among them, to whom the prophet had declared there was no peace, ch. xlv. 21. Against the terror of that word they thought to shelter themselves with their external performances, particularly their fasting, which they kept up in Babylon, and for some time after their return to their own land, Isa. viii. 19., and vi. 18. The present verse here shows them that their devotions would not entitle them to peace, while their conversations were not all of a piece with them. Others think it is principally intended against the hypocrisy of the Jews, especially the Pharisees, before, and in, our Saviour's time; they boasted of their fastings, but Christ (as the prophet here) showed them their transgressions, (Matt. xxi.) much the same with those they are here charged with. Observe, 1. The plausible profession of religion which they made, v. 2. II. The boasts they made of that profession, and the blame they laid upon God for taking no more notice of it than this. 1. In the spirit, v. 3, 4. II. With it, which spoiled the acceptableness of their fasts, v. 4, 5. 1. Instructions given them how to keep fasts aright, v. 5, 6. V. Precious promises made to those who do so keep them, ch. xlvii. 5., 6., 12. VI. The like precious promises made to those at Shiloh, xlviii. 2. The prophet, having given a large description of the sins of the Jews, he now tells them of the sins of the heathen; and it is remarkable that he begins with the sins of the Israelites, and after that reaches to those of the nations, v. 7. His exhortation is, that all who have heard, and all the nations, that dwell among them, may learn a lesson from his account of their sins, v. 8. He exhorts them to judge the nations, that dwelling among them, as they would themselves. They are to judge of all the transgressions of all the nations, in order to shew them the sins of their own nation, v. 10. The prophet exhorts them to consider the peoples sins, and what unpleasant consequences they had been in, and are still in, and to consider the sin of their holy places, and what mischiefs their sins had brought in upon them, v. 11. Their sins begin to be remembered, and their iniquities to be sought, v. 12. The prophet is assured that God will make an end of their sins, and will restore them to their inheritance, v. 13. The prophet will show them the sins of their sins, v. 14. The prophet is a witness to the righteousness of God, and to the justice of his judgments, and to the mercy of his mercies, v. 15. In the beginning of this chapter, the prophet is a witness of God's righteousness, and in the end he is a witness of his mercy.
to the bottom, lay it bare to the bone; not spare himself or his own pains, but cry as loud as he can; though he spend his strength, and waste his spirits, though he get their ill-will by it, and get himself into an ill name; yet he must not spare. He must lift up his voice like a trumpet, to make those hear of their faults, that were apt to be deaf, when admonition was addressed to them. He must give his reproves in the most powerful and pressing manner possible, as one who desired to be heeded. The trumpet does not give an uncertain sound, but, though loud and shrill, is intelligible; so must his alarms be, giving them warning of the fatal consequences of sin, Ezek. xxxiii. 3.

11. He must accept the good; how very good they seemed to be, notwithstanding, (v. 2.) Yet they seek me daily. When the prophet went about to show them their transgressions, they pleaded that they could see no transgressions which they were guilty of; for they were diligent and constant in attending on God’s worship—and what more would he have of them? Now, 1. He owns the matter of fact to be true; as far as hypocrites do that which is good, they shall not be denied the praise of it, let them make their best of it. It is owned that they have a form of godliness: (1.) They go to church, and observe their hours of prayer; They seek me daily; they are very constant in their devotions, and never omit them, nor suffer any thing to put them by. (2.) They love to hear good preaching; They went into the house of God, and John girded, and the stony ground, that received the seed of the word with joy; it is to them as a lovely song, Ezek. xxxiii. 32. (3.) They seem to take a great pleasure in the exercises of religion, and to be in their element when they are at their devotions; They delight in approaching to God, not for his sake from the apprehension of some present benefit, or expectation of future advantage to the church, the company, or the festival. (4.) They are inquisitive concerning their duty, and seem desirous only to know it, making no question but that then they should do it: They ask of me the ordinances of justice, the rulers of piety in the worship of God, the rulers of equity in their dealings with men, both which are ordinances of God, Ps. cxix. 4. 14, as if they made conscience of doing their duty; They are as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of their God; others took them for such, and they themselves took on them to be such; nothing lay open to view, that was a contradiction to their profession, but they seemed to be such as they should be. Note, Men may go a great way toward heaven, yet come short; may, go to hell with a good reputation. But, 2. He intimates that this was so far from being a cover or excuse for their sin, that really it was an aggravation of it: “Show them their sins which they go on in, notwithstanding their knowledge of good and evil, sin and duty, and the convictions of their consciences concerning it.

3. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast find pleasure, and exact all your labours. 1. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. 5. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? 6. Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? 7. Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

Here we have:

1. The displeasure which those hypocrites conceived against God, for not accepting the services which they themselves had a mighty opinion of; (v. 3.) Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? They went in the way of Cain, who was angry at God, and resented it as a gross affront, that his offering was not accepted. Having gone about to put a cheat upon God by their external services, here they go about to pick a quarrel with God for not being pleased with their services, as if he had not done fairly or justly by them. Observe, 1. How they boasted of themselves, and magnified their own performances: “We have fasted, and afflicted our souls; we have not only sought God daily, (v. 2.) but have kept some certain times of more solemn devotion.” Some think it refers to the yearly fasts, which was a name given to the arbitrary occasional fasts. Note, It is common for unhumbled hearts to be proud of their professions of humiliation, as the Pharisee, (Luke xiii.)

12. I fast twice in the week. 2. What they expected from their performances; they thought God should take great notice of them, and own himself a Debtor to them, and bless them out of their common stock; for hypocrites, while they perform the external services of religion, to promise themselves that acceptance with God, which he has promised only to the sincere; as if they must be accepted of course, or for a complaint. 3. How hesitantly they take it, that God had not put some particular marks of his favour upon them, that he had not immediately revealed to them what is good for their souls; nor advanced them to honour and prosperity: they charge God with injustice and partiality, and seem resolved to throw up their religion, and justify themselves in doing so with this, that they had found no profit in praying to God, Job xxii. 14, 15. Mal. iii. 14. Note, Reigning hypocrisy often breaks out in daring impiety, and an open contempt and reproach of God and religion, for that which the hypocrisy itself must bear all the blame of. Sinners reflect upon religion as a hard and melancholy service, and which there is nothing to be got by, when really it is its own fault that it seems so to them, because they are not sincere in it.

11. The true reason assigned why God did not accept their fastings; nor answer the prayers they made on the Lord’s day, is because they fasted fastings for the fast right; to God, even to him, Zech. vii. 5. They fasted indeed, but they persisted in their sins, and did not, as the Ninevites, turn every one from his evil way; but in the day of their fast, and notwithstanding the profess’d humiliations and covenants of that day, they went on to find pleasure, to do whatsoever seemed right in their own eyes, lawful or unlawful, Quaeque as it were—making their inculcations their law; though they seemed to afflict their souls, they still gratified their lusts as much as ever. 1. They were as covetous and unmerciful as ever: “Ye exact all your labours from your servants, and will neither release them according to the law, nor relax the rigour of their servitude.” This was their fault before the captivity, Jer. xxxx.
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8, 9. It was no less their fault after their captivity, notwithstanding all their solemn fasts; (Neh. v. 2.) "Ye exact all your dues, your debts!" (so some read it) "Ye are as rigorous and severe in extorting what you demand from those that are poor, as ever your were, though it was at the close of the yearly fast that the release was proclaimed."

[1.] These were continued, and shouted (v. 3.) "Behold fast-day and debate. When they proclaimed a fast to deprecate God's judgments, they pretended to search for those sins which provoked God to threaten them with his judgments, and under that pretence perhaps particular persons were falsely accused, as Nahob in the day of Jezebel's fast, 1 Kings xvi. 12. Or, the contending parties among those poor brought to humorous matter. Not was there in their reflections one upon another, one side crying out, "It is owing to you," and the other, "It is owing to you, that our deliverance is not wrought." Thus, instead of judging themselves, which is the proper work of a fast-day, they condemned one another. They fasted for strife, with emulation which should make the most plausible appearance on a fast-day, and humour the matter best. Nor was there among them any semblance of the times of their fasting, but they came to blows too; Ye smite with the fast of wickedness. The cruel taskmasters beat their servants, and the creditors their insolvent debtors, whom they delivered to the tormentors; they abused poor innocents with wicked hands. Now while they thus continued in sin in their private vices, that is, in coveting each other's goods, and in the intention of a fasting day, (1.) God would not allow them the use of such solemnities; "Ye shall not fast at all, if ye fast as ye do this day, causing your voice to be heard on high, in the heat of your clamours one against another; or in your devotions, which you perform so as to make them to be taken notice of for ostentation. Bring me no more of these empty, vain oblations," ch. ix. 13. Note, Those are justly forbidden the honour of a profession of religion, that will not submit to the power of it. (2.) He would not accept of them in the use of them; "Ye shall not fast, it shall not be looked upon as a fast, nor shall the voice of your prayers on those days be heard on high in heaven." Note, Those that fast and pray, and yet go on in their wicked ways, do but mock God and deceive themselves.

III. Plain instructions given concerning the true nature of a religious fast. In general, a fast is intended, 1. For the honouring and pleasing of God; it must be such a performance as he has chosen; (v. 5.) it must be an acceptable day to the Lord, in the duties of which we must order to approve ourselves to him, and obtain his favour, else our fast, else there is nothing done to any purpose. 2. For the humbling and abusing of ourselves. A fast is a day to afflict the soul; if it do not express a genuine sorrow for sin, and do not promote a real mortification of sin, it is not a fast; the law of the day of atonement was, that on that day they should afflict their souls, Lev. xvi. 29. That must be done on a fast-day, which is a real affection to the soul, as far as it is yet unregenerate and unsanctified, though a real pleasure and advantage to the soul as far as it is itself.

It concerns us therefore to inquire, on a fast-day, what it is that will be acceptable to God, and afflicting to our corrupt nature, and tending to its mortification.

[1.] We are here told negatively what is not the fast that God has chosen, and which does not amount to the afflicting of the soul. [1.] It is not enough to look demure, to put on a grave and melancholy aspect, to bow down the head like a bulrush that is withered and broken; as the hypocrites, that were of a sad countenance, and deformed their faces, that they might appear unto men to fast, Matth. vi. 16. Hanging down the head did indeed well enough become the publican, whose heart was truly humbled and broken for sin, and therefore in token of that, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven; (Luke xvii. 11.) but when it was only mimicked, as here, it was justly ridiculed, it is but hanging down the head like a bulrush, which nobody of its or takes any notice of. As the hypocrite's humiliations are but like the hanging down of a bulrush, so his elevations in his hopes are but like the flourishing of a bulrush, (Job viii. 11, 12.) which, while it is yet in its greenness, withers before any other herb.

[2.] It is not enough to do penance, to mortify the body a little, while the body of sin was untouched. It is not enough to give up speech, sackcloth, and ashes under him, which does indeed give him some uncasefulness for the present, but is soon forgotten when he returns to stretch himself upon his bed of ivory, Amos vi. 4. Will thou call this a fast? No, it is but the shadow and carease of a fast. Will thou call this an acceptable day to the Lord? No, it is so far from being so, that the hypocrisy is in abomination to him. Note, The shows of religion, though they show ever so fair in the eyes of the world, will not be accepted of God without the substance of it.

[2.] We are here told positively what is the fast that God has chosen; what that is, which will recommend a fast-day to the divine acceptance, and which is indeed pleasant to God, and a blessing to the congregation. It is that fast which is made in the corrupt nature: it is not affecting the soul for a day, (as some read it, v. 5.) that will serve; no, it must be the business of our whole lives. It is here required,

[1.] That we be just to those with whom we have dealt hardly. The fast that God has chosen, consists in reforming our lives, and undoing what we have done wrongfully; (v. 6.) to loose the bands of wickedness, the bands which we have wickedly tied, and by which others are bound out from their right, a bound down under severe usage. Those which perhaps were at first bands of justice, tying men to pay a due debt, become, when the debt is exacted with rigour from those whom Providence has reduced and emptied, bands of wickedness, and they must be loosed, (which he brings us word of,) much more terrible. It is to undo the heavy burden laid on the back of the poor servant, under which he is ready to sink; it is to let the oppressed go free from the oppression which makes his life bitter to him. "Let the prisoner for debt, that has nothing to pay, be discharged, let the vexations action be quashed, let the servant that is forcibly detained beyond the time of his servitude, be released, and thus break every yoke; not only let go those that are wrongfully kept under the yoke, but break the yoke of slavery itself; that it may not serve again another time, nor any be made again to serve under it."

[2.] That we be charitable to those that stand in need of charity, v. 7. The particulars in the former verse may be taken as acts of charity, that we not only release those whom we have unjustly oppressed, that is justice, but what we contribute to the rescue and ransom of those that are oppressed by others, to the release of captives, and the payment of the debts of the poor; but those in this verse are plainly acts of charity. This then is the fast that God has chosen. First, To provide for those that want it; that is put first as the most necessary, and which the poor can but a little while live without; it is to break thy bread to the hungry. Observe, It must be thy bread, that which is honestly got, not that which thou hast robbed others of; the bread which thou thyself hast occasion for.
the bread of thine allowance.” We must deny ourselves, that we may have to give to him that needed. Thy bread, which thou hast spared from thyself and thy family, on the fast-day, if that or the value of it be not given to the poor, it is the miser’s fast, which he makes a hand of, it is fasting for the world, not for God. This is the true fast, to break thy bread to the hungry, not only to give them that which is already broken meat, but to break bread on purpose for them; to give them leaves, and not to put them, as we commonly do, toProviding for those that want it; it is to take care of the poor that are cast out, that are forced from their dwelling, turned out of house and harbour; are cast out as rebels, (so some critics render it,) that are attainted, and whom therefore it is highly penal to protect; “If they suffer unjustly, make no difficulty of sheltering them; do not only find out quarters for them, and pay for their lodging elsewhere, but, which is a greater act of kindness, bring them thine own house, make them thine own guests. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for though thou mayest not, as some have done, thereby entertain angels, thou mayest entertain Christ himself, who will recompense it in the resurrection of the just.” I was a stranger and thou didst not entertain me, (Eph. vi. 2.) and take away the yoke, that those who have been oppressed may never be reenslaved; “as they were, Jer. xxxiv. 10, 11.” they must likewise forbear threatening; (Eph. vi. 2.) The Lord’s answer to this was, ‘Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee: the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.’ Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer: thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity: 10. And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day: 11. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. 12. And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The Repairer of the breach, The Restorer of paths to dwell in.

Here are precious promises for those to feast freely and cheerfully upon faith, who keep the fasts that God has chosen; let them know that God will make it up to them. Here is,

1. A further account of the duty to be done, in order to our interest in these promises; (v. 9, 10.) and here, the Lord’s answer to both is, ‘Thou shalt do justly and love mercy, that we cease to do evil and learn to do well. We must abstain from all acts of violence and fraud; “These must be taken away from the midst of thee, from the midst of thy person, out of thy heart;” (so some:) “thou must not only refrain from the practice of injury, but mortify in thee all inclination and disposition towards it.” Or, from the midst of thy freckles; those in authority must not only not be oppressive ourselves, but must do all we can to prevent and restrain it in all within their jurisdiction; they must not only break the yoke (v. 6.) but take away the yoke, that those who have been oppressed may never be reenslaved; (as they were, Jer. xxxiv. 10, 11.) they must likewise forbear threatening; (Eph. vi. 2.) But the Lord’s answer to this will be, ‘Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee: the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.’ Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer: thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity: 10. And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day: 11. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. 12. And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The Repairer of the breach, The Restorer of paths to dwell in.

Here are precious promises for those to feast freely and cheerfully upon faith, who keep the fasts that God has chosen; let them know that God will make it up to them. Here is,
buried alive, thou shalt recover thine eminency long overwhelmed with grief, thou shalt again look pleasant as the dawning day." Those that are cheerful in doing good, God will make cheerful in enjoying good; and this also is a special gift of God, Eccl. ii. 24. They that have showed mercy shall find mercy. Job, who in his prosperity had done a great deal of good, had friends raised up for him by the Lord, who were ready to aid him in every difficulty. As God's presence is nearer, that his light rose in obscurity.

"Not only thy light, which is sweet, but thy health too, or the healing of the wounds thou hast long complained of, shall spring forth speedily; all thy grievances shall be redressed, and thou shalt renew thy youth, and recover thy vigour." Those that have helped others out of trouble, God will help when they are in trouble.

2. God will put honour upon them: good works shall be recompensed with a good name: this is included in that light which rises out of obscurity. Though a man's extraction be mean, his family obscure, and he has no external advantages to gain him honour, yet, if he do good in his place, that will procure him respect and veneration, and his darkness shall by this means become as the noon-day; he shall be no more known by his own, but shall be known by the light of his generation. See here, what is the surest way for a man to make himself illustrious; let him study to do good; that he would be the greatest of all, and best-beloved, let him by humility and industry make himself a servant of all. "Thy righteousness shall then go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward," the gathering host, to bring up those of thee that are weary and are left behind, and to secure thee from the enemies that, like Amalek, fall upon thy rear." Observe, How good people are safe on all sides; let them look which way they will, behind them, or before them; let the Lord go before them in his brightness, and give them security; let them find themselves safely and quietly from the fear of evil; and observe what it is that is their defence, it is their righteousness, and the glory of the Lord; that is, as some suppose, Christ; for it is by him that we are justified, and God is glorified. He it is that goes before us, and is the Captain of our salvation, as he is the Lord our Righteousness; he it is that is our Rearward, on whom alone we can rely for safety, and on whom we can rely for success, and are ready to take hold on us. Or, "God himself in his providence and grace shall both go before thee as thy Guide to conduct thee, and attend thee as thy Rearward to protect thee, and this shall be the reward of thy righteousness, and so shall be for the glory of the Lord as the Rewarder of it."

4. God will always be nigh unto them, to hear their prayer for safety when our enemies pursue us, and are ready to take hold on us. On, "God himself in his providence and grace shall both go before thee as thy Guide to conduct thee, and attend thee as thy Rearward to protect thee, and this shall be the reward of thy righteousness, and so shall be for the glory of the Lord as the Rewarder of it."

5. God will direct them in all difficult and doubtful cases; (r. 11.) The Lord shall guide thee continually. While we are here in the wilderness of this world, we have need of continual direction from heaven, for if at any time we be left to ourselves, we shall certainly miss our way; and therefore it is to those who are good in God's sight, that he gives the wisdom which in all cases is profitable to direct, and so to conduct them, that his providence will make their way plain to them, both what is their duty, and what will be most for their comfort.

6. God will give them abundance of satisfaction in their own minds. As the world is a wilderness in respect of wanderings, so that they need to be guided continually, so also is it in respect of wants, and therefore it makes it necessary that they have continual supplies; as Israel in the wilderness had not only the pillar of cloud, to guide them continually, but manna and water out of the rock, to satisfy their souls in drought, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, Ps. lxxvi. 1. To a good man God gives not only wisdom and knowledge, but joy; he is satisfied in himself with the testimony of his conscience, and the assurances of God's favour. "These will satisfy thy soul, will put gladness into thy heart, even in the drought of affliction; these will make fat the bones, and fill them with marrow; will give thee that pleasure which will be a support to thee, as the bones to the body, that joy of the Lord which will be thy strength. He shall give thy bones rest," (so some read it,) "rest from the pain and sickness with which they have laboured under, and been chastened with;" so it agrees with the promise made to the merciful, (Ps. xlii. 3.) The Lord shall make all his bed in his sickness. "Thou shalt be like a watered garden, so flourishing and fruitful in graces and comforts, and like a spring of water, like a garden that has a spring of water in it, whose waters fail not either in droughts or in frosts. The principle of holy love in those that are good shall be a well of living water," John i. 14. As a spring of water, though it is continually sending forth its streams, is yet always full, so the charitable man abounds in good as he abounds in doing good, and is never the poorer for his liberality. He that waters shall himself be watered.

7. They and their families shall be public blessing. It is God's special regard to those that are fruitful and useful, to be more so, and especially to have those who descend from them to be so too. This is here promised; (r. 12.) "They that now are of thee, thy princes, and nobles, and great men, shall have such authority and influence as they never had;" or, "Those that hereafter shall be of thee, thy posterity, shall be serviceable to their generation, be a light and a glory to their age, and shall be a satisfaction of a good man, as to this world, to think that those that come after him shall be doing good when he is gone. (1.) They shall re-ecdy cities..."
that have been long in ruins; shall build the old waste places, which had lain so long desolate, that they were not habitable; and the Lord shall be there. The miraculous deliverance was fulfilled when the captives, after their return, repaired the cities of Judah, and dwelt in them, and many of those in Israel too, which had lain waste ever since the carrying away of the ten tribes. (2.) They shall carry on and finish that good work which was begun long before, and shall be helped over the obstructions which had retarded the progress of it; they shall raise up to the top that building, the foundation of which was laid long since, and has been for many generations in the rearing. This was fulfilled when the building of the temple was revived after it had stood still for many years, Ezra v. 2. Or, they shall raise up foundations which shall continue for many generations yet to come; they shall do that good which shall be of lasting consequence. (3.) They shall have the blessing and praise of all about them; "Thou shalt be called, (and it shall be to thine honour,) the repairer of the breach, the breach made by the enemy in the wall of a besieged city, which whose has the courage and dexterity to make up, or make good, gains great applause. Happy they who make up the breach added virtues, and appear in prosperity, doing in. "Thou shalt be the restorer of paths, safe and quiet paths, not only to travel in, but to dwell in; so safe and quiet, that people shall make no difficulty of building their houses by the road-side." The sun is, That if they keep such fasts as God has chosen, he will settle them again in their former peace and prosperity, and there shall be reason to make them afraid. See Zech. vii. 5, 9.—viii. 3.—5. It teaches us, that those who do justly, and love mercy, shall have the comfort of it in this world.

13. If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a Delight, the Holy of the Lord, Honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: 14. Then shall thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Great stress was always laid upon the due observation of the sabbath-day, and it was particularly required from the Jews when they were captivity in Babylon, because, by keeping that day in honour of the Creator, they distinguished themselves from the worshippers of the gods that have not made the heaven and the earth. See ch. lvi. 1, 2, where keeping the sabbath is joined, as here, with keeping judgment and doing justice. Some, indeed, understand those days of atonement, which they think is the first spoken of in the former part of the chapter, and which is called a sabbath of rest, Lev. xxvii. 32. But as the fasts before spoken of seem to be those that were occasional, so this sabbath is doubtless the weekly sabbath, that great sign between God and his professing people; his appointing it a sign of his favour to them; and their observing it, a sign of their obedience to him. Now observe here,

1. How the sabbath is to be sanctified; (v. 13.) and, remaining still a sabbatism for the people of God, this law of the sabbath is still binding to us on our Lord's day.

(1.) Nothing must be done that puts contempt upon the sabbath-day, or looks like having mean thoughts of it, when God has so highly dignified it. We must turn away our foot from the sabbath, from trampling upon it, as profane, atheistical people do, travelling on that day; so some: we must turn away our foot from doing our pleasure on that holy day, from living at large, and taking a liberty to do what we please on sabbath-days, without the control and restraint of conscience; or from indulging ourselves in the exercises of sense, in which the modern Jews wickedly place the mind, and the sabbath, though it is as great a profanation of it as any thing. On sabbath-days we must not do our own ways, not follow our callings; not find our own pleasure, not follow our sports and recreations; nor, we must not speak our own words, words that concern either our callings or our pleasures; we must not allow ourselves a liberty of speech on that day as on other days, for we must then think God's ways, make religion the business of the day; we must choose the things that please him, and speak his words, speak of divine things as we sit in the house, and walk by the way; in all we say and do we must put a difference between this day and other days.

(2.) Every thing must be done that puts an honour on the day, and to entertain the Lord in his thoughts of it; we must call it a delight, not a task only, nor a burden; we must openly profess the complacency in God and his services, and the duties of it; we must call it so to God, in thanksgiving for it, and earnest desire of his grace, to enable us to do the work of the day in its day, because we delight in it; we must call it so to others, to invite them to come, and share in the pleasure of it; and we must call it so to ourselves, that we may not entertain the least thoughts of wishing the sabbath gone, that we may sell corn. We must call it the Lord's holy day, and honourable; holy, separated from common use, and devoted to God and to his service; the holy of the Lord, the day which he has sanctified to himself. Even in Old Testament times the sabbath was called the Lord's day, and therefore is fitly called so still, and for another reason also. One Lord's Day, Rev. i. 10. It is holy, because it is the Lord's; it is Sound, because it is founded upon both accounts it is honourable; it is a beauty of holliness that is upon it, it is ancient, and its antiquity is its honour; and we must make it appear that we look upon it as honourable by honouring him, that is, God, on that day. We then put honour in the day, when we give honour to him that instituted it, and to whose honour it is dedicated.

2. What the reward is of sabbath-sanctification, v. 14. If we thus remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy.

(1.) We shall have the comfort of it; the work will be its own wages. If we call the sabbath a delight, then shall we delight ourselves in the Lord; he will move and more manifest himself to us as the delightful Subject of our thoughts and meditations, and the delightful Object of our best affections. Note, The more pleasure we take in serving God, the more pleasure we shall find in it. If we go about duty with cheerfulness, we shall go from it with satisfaction, and shall have reason to say, "It is good to be here, good to draw near to God."

(2.) We shall have the honour of it; I will make thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, which denotes not only great security, (as that, ch. xxxvi.) 16. He shall dwell on high,) but great dignity and advancement; "Thou shalt ride in state, shalt appear conspicuous, and the eyes of all thy neighbours
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shall be upon thee." It was said of Israel, when God led them triumphantly out of Egypt, that he made them to ride on the high places of the earth, Deut. xxxii. 12, 13. Those that henceforward observe his sabbath, he will thus honour. If God by his grace enable us to live above the world, and so to manage it, as not only not to be hindered by it, but to be furthered and carried on by it in our journey toward heaven, then he makes us to ride on the high places of the earth.

(8.) We shall have the profit of it, I will feed them after the heart of Jacob thy father, with all the blessings of the covenant, and all the precious products of Canaan, which was a type of heaven, and the heritage of Jacob. Observe, The heritage of believers is what they shall not only be portioned with hereafter, but fed with now; fed with the hopes of it, and not flattered; fed with the earnest and forecasts of it; and they that are so fed, have reason to say that they are well fed. In order that we may depend upon it, it is added, "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it; you may take God's word for it, for he cannot lie nor deceive; what his mouth has spoken his hand will give, his hand will do, and not one iota or tittle of his good promise shall fail to the ground." Blessed, therefore, thrice blessed, is he that doeth this, and lays hold on it, that keeps the sabbath from polluting it.

CHAP. LIX.

In this chapter, we have sin appearing exceeding sinful, and grace appearing exceeding gracious; and as what is here said of God, (v. 1.) is applied to the general corruption of mankind, (Rom. iii. 15.) so what is here said of a redeemer, (v. 20.) is applied to Christ, Rom. xi. 26. I. It is here charged upon this people, that they had themselves stopped the current of God's favours to them, and the particular sins are specified which kept good things from them, v. 1—8. II. It is here charged upon them, that they had themselves procured the judgments of God upon them, and they are told both what the judgments were which they had brought upon their own heads, (v. 9—11.) and what the sins were which provoked God to send those judgments, v. 12—15. III. It is here promised that, notwithstanding this, God would work deliverance for them, purely for his own name's sake, (v. 16—19.) and would reserve mercy in store for them, and entail it upon them, v. 20, 21.

1. Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. 3. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. 4. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. 5. They hatch cockatrice eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper. 6. Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. 7. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. 8. The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths; whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

The prophet here rectifies the mistake of those who had been quarrelling with God, because they had not the deliverances wrought for them, which they had been often fasting and praying for. ch. lii. 3. Note, 1. That it was not owing to God; they had no reason to lay the fault upon him, that they were not saved out of the hands of their enemies; for, 1. He was still as able to help as ever: His hand is not shortened, his power is not at all lessened, straitened, or abridged; whether we consider the extent of his power or the efficacy of it, God can reach as far as ever, and with as strong a hand as ever. Note, The church's salvation comes from the hand of God, and that is not waxed weak, nor at all shortened.

Is the Lord's hand waxed short? (says God to Moses, Numb. xi. 23.) No, it is not; he will not have it thought so. Neither length of time, nor strength of enemies, nor weakness of instruments, can shorten God's power or abate his strength. Note, the power of God, with which it is all one to save one or a few. 2. He was still as ready and willing to help as ever, or answer to prayer; his ear is not heavy, that it can not hear. Though he has many prayers to hear and answer, and though he has been long hearing prayer, yet he is still as ready to hear prayer as ever; the prayer of the upright is as much his delight as ever it was, and the promises which are pleaded, and put in suit, in prayer, are still yea and amen, inviolably sure. More is implied than is expressed; not only his ear is not heavy, but he is quick of hearing, even before they call, he answers, ch. lxxv. 24. If our prayers be not answered, and the salvation we wait for be not wrought for us, it is not because God is weary of hearing prayer, but because we are weary of praying; not because his ear is heavy when we speak to him, but because our ears are heavy when he speaks to us.

II. That it was owing to themselves, they stood in their own light, and put a bar in their own door; God was coming toward them in ways of mercy, and they hindered him; Your iniquities have kept good things from you, Jer. v. 25. See what mischief sin doth. It hides God from sight; coming down upon us; it is a partition-wall that separates between us and God. Notwithstanding the infinite distance that is between God and man by nature, there was a correspondence settled between them, till sin set them at variance, justly provoked God against man, and unjustly alienated man from God; thus it separates between them and God. He is your God, yours in possession, and therefore there is so much the more malignity and mischievousness in sin, which separates between you and him. Sin hides his face from us; (which denotes great displeasure, Deut. xxxxi. 17.) it provokes him in anger to withdraw his gracious presence, to suspend the tokens of his favour, and the instances of his help; he hides his face, as refusing to be seen hither. In hiding himself, he is present with his enemies, sin exceeding sinful, withdrawing the creature from his allegiance to his Creator; and see sin in all its consequences, in sin exceeding hurtful, separating us from God, and so separating us not only from all good, but to all evil, (Deut. xxix. 21.) which is the very quintessence of the curse. 2. It hinders our prayers from coming up unto God; it provokes him to hide his face, that he will not hear, as he has said, ch. i. 15. If we regard iniquity in our heart, if we indulge it, and allow ourselves in it,
God will not hear our prayers, Ps. lxvi. 18. We cannot expect that he should countenance us while we go on to affront him.

Now, to justify God in hiding his face from them, and proceeding in his controversy with them, the prophet shows very largely, in the following verses, how many and great their iniquities were, according to the charge given him, (ch. viii. 1.) To show God's people their transgressions; and it is a black bill of indictment that is here drawn up against them, consisting of many particulars, any one of which was enough to separate between them and a just and a holy God. Let us endeavour to reduce these articles of impeachment to practical heads.

(1.) We must begin with their thoughts, for there all sins begin, and thence it takes its rise; Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity, v. 7. Their imaginations are so, only evil continually; their projects and designs are so; they are continually contriving some mischief or other; and how to compass the gratification of some base lust, v. 4. They conceive mischief in their fancy, purpose, counsel, and resolution; thus the embryo receives its shape and life; and then they bring forth iniquity, put it in execution when it is ripened for it; though it be in pain that the iniquity is brought forth, through the oppositions of Providence and the checks of their own consciences, yet, when they have compassed their wicked purpose, they set about making their pride and their pleasure; as if it were a man-child born into the world; thus when lust has conceived, it bringeth forth sin, Jam. 1. 15. This is called, (v. 5.) hatching the cockatrice' egg, and weaving the spider's web. See how the thoughts and contrivances of wicked men are employed, and about what they set their wits on work. [1] At the best, it is but that which is base and hateful, and their thoughts are vain, like weaving the spider's web, which the poor silly animal takes a great deal of pains about, and when all is done, it is a weak, insignificant thing, a reproach to the place where it is, and which the besom sweeps away in an instant; such are the thoughts which worldly men entertain themselves with, building castles in the air, and like the spider's web, which the poor silly spider, when it is spun, and all the thought and toil that went into it, is not worth taking, (Pro. xxx. 18.) but cannot keep her hold. [2] Too oft it is about that which is malicious and spiteful; they hatch the eggs of the cockatrice or adder, which are poisonous, and produce venomous creatures; such are the thoughts of the wicked who delight in doing mischief. He that eats of their eggs, that has any dealings with them, dies, he is in danger of having some mischief or other done him; and that which is crushed in order to be eaten of, or which begins to be hatched, and you promise yourself some useful fowl from it, breaks out into a viper, which you meddle with at your peril, happy they that have least to do with such men. Even the spider's web which they work with is, like a foolish design to catch flies in, and make a prey of them; for, rather than not being do mischief, they will play at small game.

(2.) Out of this abundance of wickedness in the heart their mouth speaks, and yet it does not always speak out the wickedness that is within, but, for the more effectual compassing of the mischievous design, it is disseminated, and covered with much fair show; they were liars and speechifiers, again, (v. 4.) They speak lies, pretending kindness, where they intend the greatest mischief; or, by slanders and false accusations they blasted the credit and reputation of those they had a spite to, and so did them a real mischief unseen, and perhaps by suborning witnesses against them took from them their estates and lives; for a false tongue is sharp arrows and coals of juniper, and every thing that is mischievous; Your tongue has muttered perverseness. When they could not, for shame, speak their malice against their neighbours aloud, or durst not, for fear of being disproved and put to confusion, they muttered it secretly. Backbiters are called misstressers.

(3.) Their actions were all of a piece with their thoughts and words. They were guilty of shedding innocent blood, a crime of the most heinous nature; Your hands are defiled with blood; (v. 3.) for blood is defiling, it leaves an indelible stain of guilt upon the conscience, which nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse it from; nor was this a case of necessity, or one that occurred when there was some thing of a forcible kind upon them, but their feet run to this evil, naturally and eagerly, and, hurried on by the impetuses of their malice and revenge, they make haste to shed innocent blood, as if they were afraid of losing an opportunity to do a barbarous thing, Prov. i. 16. Jer. xxii. 17. Hasting and destruction are in their paths. Wherever they go, they carry mischief along with them, and the tendency of their way is to lay waste and destroy, nor do they care what havoc they make; nor do they only thirst after blood, but with other iniquity are their fingers defiled; (v. 3.) they wrong people in their estates, and make every thing their own that they can lay their hands on. They trust in vanity; (v. 4.) they depend upon their arts of craft and cunning to confer or take advantage to or from any one, and to make mischief to others, by vanity to them, and their deceiving others will but deceive themselves; their works, which they take so much pains about, and have their hearts so much upon, are all works of iniquity; their whole business is one continual course of oppressions and vexations, and the act of violence is in their hands, according to the arts of violence that are in their heads, and their thoughts of violence.

(4.) No methods are taken to redress these grievances, and reform these abuses; (v. 4.) None calls for justice, none complains of the violation of the sacred laws of justice, nor seeks to right those that suffer wrong, or to get the laws put in execution against vice and profaneness, and those wick practices which are the shame, and threaten to be the ruin of the whole nation, or rather those, which are a common ruin of themselves and others. When these things are done, there is blame to be laid not only upon the magistrates that should administer justice, but upon the people that should call for it; private persons ought to contribute to the public good by discovering secret wickedness, and giving those an opportunity to punish it, that have it in the power of their hands; but it is ill with a state when princes rule ill, and the people lose to have it so. Truth is opposed, and there is not any that pleads for it, not any that has the conscience and courage to appear in defence of an honest cause, and confront a prosperous fraud and wrong. The way of peace is as little regarded as the way of truth; they know it not, they never study the things that make for peace; no care is taken to prevent or punish the breaches of those laws, and the wrongs committed in difference among neighbours; they are utter strangers to every thing that looks quiet and peaceable, and affect that which is blustering and turbulent. There is no judgment in their goings; they have not any sense of justice in their dealings, it is a thing they make no account of at all, but can only break through all its fences, if they stand in the way of their mischiefs, covetous designs.

(5.) In all this they act foolishly, very foolishly, and as much against their interest as against reason and equity. They that practise iniquity trust in vanity, which will certainly deceive them, v. 4. Their webs, which they weave with so much art and industry, shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves, either for shelter or
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The right, and recovering our property again; oppression is near us, and judgment is far from us; our enemies are far from giving us cause to doubt their sincerity, but still they are applying to us with the desperation of the dense, impudent, and heartless impostor. Their expectations were sadly disappointed, which made their case the more sad; "We wait for light as they that wait for the morning, but behold obscurity; we cannot discern the least dawning of the day of our deliverance; we look for judgment, but there is none;" (v. 11.) neither God nor man appears for our succour; we look for salvation, because God (we think) has promised it to us, but we are astounded with fasting; we looked for it as for brightness, but it is far off from us, as far off as ever, for aught we can perceive, and still we walk in darkness; and the higher our expectations have been raised, the sorrier is the disappointment." (3.) They were quite at a loss what to do to help themselves, and were at their wit's end; (v. 10.) "We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon-day as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men." (11.) We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us. (12.) For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them: (13.) In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. (14.) And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. (15.) Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.

The scope of this paragraph is the same with that of the last, to show that sin is the great mischief-maker; as it is that which keeps good things from us, so it is that which brings evil things upon us. But as there it is spoken by the prophet, in God's name, to the people, for their conviction and humiliation, and that God might be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges; so here it seems to be spoken by the people of God, as an acknowledgment of that which was there told them, and an expression of their humble submission and subscription to the justice and equity of God's proceedings against them. Their uncircumcised hearts here seem to be humbled in some measure, and they are brought to confess: the confession is at least expressed from them, that God has justly walked contrary to them, because they had walked contrary to him. They acknowledge that God had confessed it to them, and had walked contrary to them. Their case was very deplorable, v. 9, 10, 11. (1.) They were in distress, trampled upon and oppressed by their enemies, unjustly dealt with, and ruled with rigour; and God did not appear for them, to plead their just and injured cause; "Judgment is far from us, neither does justice overtake us," Though we to our persecutors, we are sure that we have right on our side, and they are the wrong-doers, yet we are not relieved, we are not righted; we have not done justice to one another, and therefore God suffers our enemies to deal thus unjustly with us, and we are as far as ever from being restored to our
it is transgressing and lying against the Lord, v. 1. To persons of those that profess themselves God's people, and bear his name, are, upon this account, worse than the sins of others, that in transgressing they lie against the Lord, they falsely accuse him, they misrepresent and belie him, as if he had dealt hardly and unfairly with them; or, they perniciously break covenant with him, and falsify their most sacred and solemn engagements to him, that is lying against him; so that the Lord saith, Isa. 1:17; And though we were bound as our God, and to whom we ought to cleave with purpose of heart; from him we have departed, as the rebellions subject from his allegiance to his rightful prince, and the adulterous wife from the guide of her youth, and the covenant of her God. (3.) They own that there was a general decay of moral honesty; and it is not strange that it should be so, since the iniquity is bred in the family, and is hateful to one another. They spake oppression, declared openly for that, though it was a revolt from their God, and a revolt from truth, by the sacred bonds of which we should always be tied and held fast. They conceived and uttered words of falsehood; many an ill thing is conceived in the mind, yet is prudently stifled there, and not suffered to go any further, because these sinners are afraid of declaring, that whatever wickedness they conceived, they gave it an imprimatur—a sanction, and made no difficulty of publishing it; to think an ill thing is bad, but to say it is much worse. Many a word of falsehood is uttered in haste, for want of consideration, but these were conceived and uttered, were uttered deliberately, and of malice prepense. They were words of falsehood, and yet they are said to be uttered from the heart, because they differed from the real sentiments of the heart, and therefore were words of falsehood, yet they agreed with the malice and wickedness of the heart, and were the natural language of that; it was a double heart, Ps. xii. 2. Those who by the grace of God keep themselves free from these crimes, yet put themselves into the confession of sin, because members of that nation which was generally thus corrupted. (4.) They own that that was not done, which might have been done, to reform the land, and to amend what was amiss, v. 14. Judgment, that should go forward, and bear down the opposition that is made to it, that should run its course like a river, like a mighty stream, is turned away backward, a contrary course; and what may have become of it, as was before, is now over to the greatest injustice; judgment, that should check the proceedings of fraud and violence, is driven back, and so they go on triumphantly. "Justice stands afar off, even from our courts of judicature, which are so crowded with the patrons of oppression, that equity cannot enter, cannot have admission into the court, cannot be heard, or at least not will be heard. Equity enters not into the courts of the great, which they decree, ch. x. 1. Truth is fallen in the street, and there it may be to be trampled upon by every foot of pride, and she has never a friend that will lend a hand to help her up; yea, truth fails, in common conversation, and in dealings between man and man, so that one knows not whom to believe or whom to trust." (5.) They own that there was a party enters not into the court, which they decree, which good; He that does evil goes unpunished; but he that departs from evil makes himself a prey to those beasts of prey that were before described; it is crime enough with them for a man not to do as they do, and they treat him as an enemy who will not partake with them in their wickedness. He that departs from evil is accounted mad; so the margin reads it; such singularity is branded as folly, and he is thought next door to a madman, who swins against the stream that runs so strong. (6.) They own that this could not but be very displeasing to the God of heaven. The evil was done in his sight; they knew very well, though they were not willing to acknowledge it, that the Lord saw it; though it was done secretly, and gilded over with spurious pretences, yet it could not be concealed from his all-seeing eye; all the wickedness that is in the world is naked and open before the eyes of God. And as he is of quicker eyes than not to see iniquity, so he is of purer eyes to see iniquity, and the least approbation or allowance; He saw it and it displeased him, though it was among his own professing people that he saw it; it was evil in his eyes, he saw the sinfulness of all this sin, and that which was most offensive to him was, that there was no judgment, no reformation; had he seen any signs of that, though the sin displeased him, he would soon have received to the sinner, upon their repentance from their evil way. Then the sin of a nation becomes national, and brings public judgment, when it is not restrained by public justice.

16. And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. 17. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. 18. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies; tc the islands he will repay recompense. 19. So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. 20. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. 21. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.

How sin abounded, we have read, to our great amazement, in the former part of the chapter; how grace does much more abound, we read in these verses. And as sin took occasion from the commandment to become more exceeding sinful, so grace took occasion from the transgression of the commandment to appear more exceeding gracious. Observe,

1. Why God wrought salvation for this proving people, notwithstanding their provocations; it was purely for his own name's sake; because there was nothing in them either to bring it about, or to induce him to bring it about for them, no merit to deserve it, no might to effect it, he would do it himself, would be exalted in his own strength, for his own glory. 1. He took notice of their weakness and wickedness; He saw that there was no man that could do anything for the support of the bleeding cause of religion and virtue among men, not a man that would execute judgment, (Jer. v. 1.) that would
Esther herself in a work of reformation; those that complained of the badness of the times, had not zeal and courage enough to appear and act against it; there was a universal complaint. They now, not only against the tide; most were wicked, and these that were not so, were yet weak, and durst not attempt any thing in opposition to the wickedness of the wicked. There was no intercessor; either none to intercede with God, to stand in the gap, by prayer to turn away his wrath; (it would have pleased him to be thus met, and he wondered that he had not done so before.) He had no firm support of justice and truth, which were trampled upon, and run down, (v. 14.) no advocate to speak a good word for those who were made a prey of because they kept their integrity, v. 15. They complained that God did not appear for them; (ch. viii. 3.) but God with much more reason complains that they did nothing for themselves, intimating how ready he would have been to do them good, if he had found among them the least motion towards a reformation.

2. He engaged his own strength and righteousness for them; they shall be saved, for all this; and,

(1.) Because they have no strength of their own, not any active men that will set to it in good earnest, to redress the grievances either of their iniquities or of their enemies; because this is committed to God's valiant, and powerful, and righteous arm, (ch. ix. 15.) salvation to him, to his people, or to him whom he would raise up to take the Deliverer, Christ, the Power of God, and Arm of the Lord, that Man of his right hand, on whom he made strong for himself. The work of reformation (that is the first and principal article of the salvation) shall be wrought by the immediate influences of the divine grace on men's consciences. Since magistrates, and societies for reformation, fail of doing their part, one will not do justice, nor the other call for it, God will let them know that he can do it without them, when his time is come thus to prepare his people for mercy. And then the work of deliverance shall be wrought by the immediate operations of the Divine Providence on men's affections or affairs. When God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, and brought his people out of Babylon, not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, then his own arm brought salvation, which is never shortened.

(2.) Because they have no righteousness of their own to merit these favours, and to which God might have an eye in working for them, therefore his own righteousness sustained him, and bore him out in it. Doth it not speak of the same thing when Paul says, they delivered themselves and their enemies, through grace appears for them. Though they can expect no favour as due to them, yet he will be just to himself, to his own purpose, and promise, and covenant with his people: he will, in righteousness, punish the enemies of his people; see Deut. ix. 5. Not for thy righteousness, but for the wickedness of these nations, they are driven out. In our reformation as by a breastplate, securing his own honour, as a breastplate does the vultures, in all his proceedings, by the justice and equity of them; and then he put a helmet of salvation upon his head; so sure is he to effect the salvation he intends, that he takes salvation itself for his helmet, which therefore must needs he impenetrable, and in which he appears very illustrious in his enemies, and amiable in the eyes of his friends. When righteousness is his coat of arms, salvation is his crest. In allusion to this, among the pieces of a Christian's armour we find the breastplate of righteousness, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation; (1 Cor. vii. 28, 31.) and it is called the arm of God, because he wore it first, and so fitted it for us.

(3.) Because they have no spirit or zeal to do any thing for themselves, God will put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and clothe himself with zeal as a cloak; he will make his justice upon the enemies of his church and people, and his jealousy for their wrongs, and his contempt on his own gifts and graces, and the support of justice and truth, which were trampled upon, and run down, (v. 14.) no advocate to speak a good word for those who were made a prey of because they kept their integrity, v. 15. They complained that God did not appear for them; (ch. viii. 3.) but God with much more reason complains that they did nothing for themselves, intimating how ready he would have been to do them good, if he had found among them the least motion towards a reformation.

II. What the salvation is, that shall be wrought by the righteousness and strength of God himself.

1. There shall be a present temporal salvation wrought out for the Jews in Babylon, or elsewhere, in distress and captivity. This is promised (v. 18, 19.) as a type of something further. When God's times will come, and when his own time will come, his people shall be delivered from those fail that should forward it. It is here promised,

(1.) That God will reck-on with his enemies, and will render to them according to their deeds; to the enemies of his people abroad, that have oppressed them; to the enemies of justice and truth at home, that have oppressed them; for they also are God's enemies; and when the day of vengeance comes, he will deal with them as they have deserved; according to retribution, (so the word is,) the law of retributions; (Rev. xiii. 10.) or, according to former retributions, as he has rendered to his enemies formerly, accordingly he will now repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies; his fury shall not exceed the rules of justice, as men's fury commonly does. Even to the islands, that lie most remote, if they have appeared against him, he will repay recompense; for his hand shall find out all his enemies, (Ps. xxi. 8.) and his arrows reach them. Though God's people have behaved so ill, that they do not deserve to be delivered, yet his enemies behave so much worse, that they do deserve to be destroyed.

(2.) That, whatever attempts the enemies of God's people may afterward make upon them, to disturb their peace, they shall be halted and brought to naught; When the enemy shall come in like a flood, like a high spring-tide, or a land-flood, which threatens to bear down all before them without control, then the Spirit of the Lord by some secret, undiscovered power, shall lift up a standard against him, and so (as the margin reads it) put him to flight. He that has delivered, will still deliver. When God's people are weak and helpless, and have no standard to lift up against the invading power, God will give a banner to them that fear him, (Ps. lxi. 4.) will by his Spirit lift up a standard, which will draw multitudes together to appear on the church's behalf. Some read it, He shall come (the name of the Lord, and his glory, before a foreign, or alien enemy, the Spirit of the Lord lifting him up for an Ensign, Christ by the preaching of his gospel shall cover the earth with the knowledge of God as with the waters of a flood, the Spirit of the Lord setting up Christ as a Standard to the Gentiles, ch. xi. 10.

(3.) That all this should redound to the glory of God, and the advancement of religion in the world; (p. 19.) So shall they fear the name of the Lord and his glory, in all nations that lie eastward or westward;
ward. The deliverance of the Jews out of captivity, and the destruction brought on their oppressors, would awaken multitudes to inquire concerning the God of Israel, and induce them to serve and worship him, and enlist themselves under the standard which the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up. God’s appearance for his church shall occasion the accession of many to it. This had its full accomplishment in gospel-times, when many came from the east and west, to fill up the places of the children of the kingdom that shall be cast out when there were set up eastern and western churches, Matth. viii. 11.

2. There shall be a more glorious salvation wrought out by the Messiah in the fulness of time, which shall be attended with a new creation, and a new order of things, as declared by the four great promises relating to that salvation.

(1.) That the Son of God shall come to us to be our Redeemer; (v. 20.) Thy Redeemer shall come; it is applied to Christ, (Rom. xi. 26.) There shall come the Deliverer. The coming of Christ as the Redeemer is the summary of all the promises both of the Old and New Testament, and this was the redemption in Jerusalem which the believing Jews looked for, Luke ii. 38. Christ is our God, our next Kinsman, that redeems both the person and the estate of the poor debtor. Observe, (1.) The place where this Redeemer shall appear; he shall come to Zion, for there, on that holy hill, the Lord will appear in due time, as his Redeem ( Hos. ii. 22.) The chief Corner-stone was to be laid, 1 Pet. ii. 6. He came to his temple there, (Mal. iii. 1.) there salvation was to be placed, (ch. xlvii. 13.) for thence the word was to go forth, ch. ii. 3. Zion was a type of the gospel-church, for which the Redeemer acts in all his appearances; The Redeemer shall come forth of the house of Zion; so the LXX. read it, (v. 22.) The prophetic names given to the Redeemer’s coming, that shall lift up their heads, knowing that their redemption draws nigh; he shall come to those that turn from ungodliness to Jacob, to those that are in Jacob, to the praying seed of Jacob, in answer to their prayers; yet not to all that are in Jacob, that are within the pale of the visible church, but to those only that turn from transgressions, from the world, and in Jacob make them the sins which Christ came to redeem them from. The sinners in Zion will fare never the better for the Redeemer’s coming to Zion, if they go on still in their trespasses.

(2.) That the Spirit of God shall come to us, to be our Sanciher, v. 21. In the Redeemer there was a new covenant made with us, a covenant of promises: and this is the great and comprehensive promise of that covenant, that God will give and continue his word and Spirit to his church and people throughout all generations. God’s giving the Spirit to them that ask him, includes the giving of them all good things, Luke xi. 13. Matth. viii. 11. This covenant here is said to be made with them, with them that turn from transgressions, for they shall cause to be taught to do well. But the promise is made to a single person, My Spirit that is upon thee, being directed, either, [1.] To Christ as the Head of the church, who received, that he might give. The Spirit promised to the church was first upon him, and from his head that precious unction descended to the skirts of his garments, and the word of the gospel was first spoken to his mouth; for it began to be spoken by the Lord. And all believers are his seed, in whom he prolongs his days, ch. lii. 10. Or, [2.] To the church; and so it is a promise of the continuance and perpetuity of the church in the world to the end of time, parallel to these promises, that the throne and seed of Christ shall endure for ever, Ps. lxxxix. 29. 36.—xxii. 30. Observe, First, How the church shall be kept up; in a succession, as the world of mankind is kept up, by the seed and the seed’s seed; as one generation passes away, another generation shall come; instead of the fathers shall be the children. Secondly, How long it shall be kept up; from henceforth and for ever, always, even unto the end of the world. For the world is the place of God’s kingdom on earth, and the church is the extension of the same in the six times of the church. We may be sure that as long as it does stand, Christ will have a church in it, though not always visible. Thirdly, By what means it shall be kept up; by the constant residence of the Word and Spirit in it. 1. The Spirit that was upon Christ shall always continue in the hearts of the faithful; there shall be some in every age on whom he shall abide, and in the indwelling of his Spirit the Comforter shall abide with the church for ever, John xiv. 16. 2. The word of Christ shall always continue in the mouths of the faithful; there shall be some in every age, who, believing with the heart unto righteousness, shall with the tongue make confession unto salvation. The word shall never depart out of the mouth of the prophet, for there shall still be a seed to speak Christ’s holy language, and profess his holy religion. Observe, The Spirit and the word go together, and by them the church is kept up. For the word in the months of our ministers, nay, the word in our own mouths, will not profit us, unless the Spirit work with the word, and give us an understanding. But the Spirit does his work by the word, and in combination with it; and the church is pretended to be a dictate of the Spirit must be tried by the scriptures. On these foundations the church is built, stands firm, and shall stand for ever; Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone.

CHAP. LX.

This whole chapter is all to the same purport, all in the same strain; it is a part of God’s covenant with his church, which is spoken of in the last verse of the foregoing chapter, and the blessings here promised. They begin with a description of the church, and how it is to be profited by the presence of the Son of God in the midst of it. It is the most real and comprehensive description of the church that can be given. All the promises of the New Covenant are included in it. The expressions used are of frequent use and recurrence in the New Testament, and have been made the theme of exposition by him who is the Redeemer of the world. The new covenant made with the house of Jacob shall be made with all the house of Israel, Jer. xxxi. 31. This new covenant is compared to a great sacrifice, which has been held in view as a type of the redemption of the world, and the reconciliation of men to God, and which has obtained for us the forgiveness of sins.

1. A RISE, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. 2. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. 3. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. 4. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.
Then shalt thou see, and flow together, and thy heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. 6. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord. 7. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory. 3. Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?

It is here promised that the gospel-temple shall be very light, and very large.
ported by sea, it shall all be converted to thee and to the use of the wealth of the rich merchants shall be laid out in works of piety and charity. (2.) The mighty men of the nations shall employ their night in the service of the church; "The forces, or troops, of the Gentiles shall come unto thee, to guard thy coasts, strengthen thine interests, and, if occasion be, to fight thy battles." The forces of the Gentiles had often been against the church, but now they shall be employed by God for her service. (3.) The wealth imported by land-carriage, as well as that by sea, shall be made use of in the service of God and the church; (v. 6.) The camels and dromedaries that bring gold and incense, gold to make the golden altar of, and incense and sweet perfumes to burn upon it; they of Midian and Sheba shall bring the richest commodities of their country, not to trade with, but to honour God with, and not in small quantities, but camel-loads of them. This was in part fulfilled when the wise men of the east, being instructed in a vision of the star, were induced (perhaps, drawn) by the brightness of the star, came to Christ, and presented to him treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, Matth. ii. 11. (4.) Great numbers of sacrifices shall be brought to God's altar, acceptable sacrifices, and, though brought by Gentiles, they shall find acceptance, v. 7. Kedar was famous for flocks, and, probably, the fattest rams were those of Midian; they might come with acceptance on God's altar. God must be served and honoured with what we have, according as he has blessed us, and with the best we have. This was fulfilled when by the decree of Darius the governors beyond the rivers (perhaps of some of these countries) were ordered to furnish the temple at Jerusalem with bullocks, rams, and lambs, for the burnt-offering of the God of heaven, Ezra vi. 9. It had a further accomplishment, and we trust will have, in the bringing in of the fulness of the Gentiles to the church, which is called the sacrificing or offering up of the Gentiles unto God, Rom. xv. 16. The flocks and rams are precious souls; for they are sent to minister to the church, and to come up as living sacrifices, presenting themselves to God by a sacrifice of holiness, Rom. xii. 1. How shall God be honoured by the increase of the church, and the accession of such numbers to it. (1.) They shall interpret the honour of his name in it. When they bring their gold and incense, it shall not be to show the riches of their country, or to gain applause to themselves for piety and devotion, but to shew forth the praises of the Lord, v. 6. Our brethren and foreskins are acceptable to God when we are not acceptable, further than we have an eye to the glory of God in them. And this must be our business in our attendance on public ordinances, to give unto the Lord the glory due to his name; for therefore, as these here, we are called out of darkness into light, that we should shew forth the praises of him that called us, I Pet. ii. 9. (2.) God will advance us by a honour of his character, so he has said, (v. 7.) I will glorify the house of my glory. The Church is the house of God's glory, where he manifests his glory to his people, and receives that homage by which they do honour to him. And it is for the glory of this house, and of him that keeps it; there, both that the Gentiles shall bring their offerings to it, and that they shall be accepted therein.

5. How the church shall herself be affected with this increase of her numbers, v. 5. (1.) She shall be in a transport of joy upon this account; "Thou shalt see, and flow together," (or flow to and fro, "in a pleasing agitation about it," as surprised at it, but extremely joyful at it." (2.) The mingled mixture of fear with this joy; "Thine heart shall fear, doubting whether it be lawful to go into the uncircumcised, and eat with them." Peter was so possessed with this fear, that he needed a vision and voice from heaven to help him over it, Acts x. 28. But, (3.) When this fear is conquered, thy heart shall be enlarged and strengthened, and the things that thou have made in it for all the Gentile converts, thou shalt not have such a narrow soul as thou hast had, nor affections so confined within the Jewish pale." When God intends the beauty and prosperity of his church, he gives this largeness of heart, and an extensive charity. (4.) These converts flocking to the church shall be greatly admired; (v. 8.) Who are these that fly as a cloud? Obad. xii. How the conversion of souls is here described; it is flying to Christ and to his church; for thither we are directed; it is flying like a cloud, though in great multitudes, so as to overspread the heavens, yet with great unanimity, all as one cloud; they shall come with speed, as a cloud flying on the wings of the wind, and come openly, and in the view of all, their enemies and their beholding men, (v. vii.) and yet not able to hinder them. They shall fly as doves to their windows, in great flights, many together; they fly on the wings of the harmless dove, which flies low, denoting their innocency and humility. They fly to Christ, to the church, to the word and ordinances, as doves, by instinct, to their own windows, to their own home; thither they fly for refuge; and they are pursued by the birds of prey; and thither they fly for rest when they have been wandering and are weary, as Noah's dove to the ark. (2.) How the conversion of souls is here admired; it is spoken of with wonder and with pleasure; Who are these? We have reason to wonder that so many flock to Christ; when we see them altogether, we shall wonder whence they all come; and we have reason to admire with pleasure and affection those that do flock to him; Who are these? How excellent, how amiable are they! What a pleasant sight is it to see poor souls hastening to Christ, with a full resolution to abide with him!

9. Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. 10. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. 11. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually: they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. 12. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall utterly wasted. 13. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. 14. The sons also of them that afflicting thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that de-
spised shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

The promises made to the church in the foregoing verses are here repeated, ratified, and enlarged upon; designed to encourage the Jews after their return out of captivity; but certainly looking further, to the enlargement and advancement of the gospel-church, and the abundance of spiritual blessings with which it shall be enriched.

1. God will be very gracious and propitious to them. We must begin with that promise, because they are all the rest take rise. The sanctuary that was desolate then begins to be repaired, when God causes his face to shine upon it. (Dan. ix. 17.) All the favour that the people of God find with men, is owing to the light of God's countenance, and his favour to them; (v. 10.) "All shall now make court to thee, for in my wrath I smote thee, while thou wast in captivity." (The sufferings of the church, especially those of Jerusalem, will be blessings against which these promises here will be its relief, are sad tokens of God's displeasure.) "But now in my favour have I had mercy on thee, and therefore have all this mercy in store for thee."

1. Many shall be brought into the church, even from far countries; (v. 9.) Surely the isles shall wait for me, shall welcome the gospel, and shall attend the children of God that are scattered abroad, John xi. 42. (2.) What they shall bring with them; they live at such a distance, that they cannot bring their flocks and their rams; but, like those who lived remote from Jerusalem, who, when they came up to worship at the feast, because they could not bring their tithe in kind, turned it into money; they shall bring their silver and gold with them. Note, When we give up ourselves to God, we must with ourselves give up all we have to him. If we honour him with our spirits, we shall honour him with our substance. (3.) To whom they shall devote and dedicate themselves, and all they are worth; to the name of the Lord thy God, to God as the Lord of all, and the church's God and King; even to the Holy One of Israel, whom Israel worships as a Holy One, in the beauty of holiness; and glorified thee. Note, The honour God puts upon his church and people, should not only engage us to honour him, but invite us to join ourselves to them; We will go with you, for God is with you, Zech. viii. 23.

3. Those that come into the church shall be welcome; for so spacious is the holy city, that though, Lord, one shall not hurt him; because he has there is room. "Therefore thy gates shall be open continually, (v. 11.) not only because thou hast no reason to fear thy enemies, but because thou hast reason to expect thy friends." It is usual with us to leave our doors open, or leave some to be ready to open them, all night, if we look for a child or a guest to come in late. Note, Christ is always ready to entertain us till the time comes, he never out of the way, nor can they ever come uneasonably; the gate of mercy is always open, night and day, or shall soon be opened, to them that knock. Ministers, the doorkeepers, must be always ready to admit those that offer themselves to the Lord. God not only keeps a good house in his church, but he keeps open house; that, at any time, by the preaching of the word, in season and out of season, the forces of the Gentiles, and the kings or commanders of those forces, may be brought into the church. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and let such welcome guests as these come in.

All these things about the church shall be made in some way or other serviceable to it. Though dominion is far from being found in men's grace, it is founded in God's; and he that made the inferior creatures useful to man, will make the nations of men useful to the church; The earth helped the woman; All things are for your sakes. So here, (v. 10.) "Even the sons of strangers that have neither knowledge of thee, nor kindness for thee, that have always been aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, even they shall build up thy wall, and their kings shall in that and other things minister unto thee, and not think it any disparagement to them." This was fulfilled when the king of Persia, and the governors of the provinces, by his order, were aiding and assisting Nehemiah in building the wall about Jerusalem. Rather than Jezebel's statue shall be raised against it, stranger shall be raised up to build them. Even those that do not belong to the church, may be a protection to it. And the greatest of men should not think it below them to minister to the church, but rejoice that they are in a capacity, and have a heart, to do it any service. Nay, it is the duty of all to do what they can in their places to advance the kingdom of Christ in the interest of his church, not only those that are in peril if they do not; for, (v. 12.) The nation and kingdom that will not serve the Lord shall perish; not that they must perish by the sword, or by human anathemas; or as if this gave any countenance to the using of external force for the propagating of the gospel; or as if men might be compelled by penalties and punishment to come into the church; by no means. But those who will not by faith submit to Jesus Christ, the king of the church, and serve him, they shall perish eternally, Ps. ii. 12. They that will not be subject to Christ's golden sceptre, to the government of his Word and Spirit, that will not be brought under, or kept in, by the discipline of his family, shall be broken in pieces by his iron rod; Bring them forth, and slay them before me, Luke xiv. 27. and every other timber shall be broken, proper for the carved work thereof, which the enemy had broken down, Ps. lxxiv. 5. 6. The temple, the place of God's sanctuary, shall he not only rebuilt, but beautified. It is the place of his feet, where he rests and resides, Ezek. xlvii. The ark is called his footstool, because it was under the mercy-seat, Ps. lxxxvii. 7. This will he make glorious in the eyes of the people, and glorious in the presence of his saints; having with them all his friends, the glory of the latter house, to which this refers, though in many instances inferior, was yet really greater than the glory of the former, because Christ came to that temple, Mal. iii. 1. It was likewise adorned with costly stones and gifts, (Luke xxii. 53.) to this which promise may have some reference; yet so slightly did Christ speak of them there, that we must suppose it to have its full accomplishment in the beauties of holiness, and the graces and comforts of the Spirit, with which gospel-adornees are adorned and enriched.

6. The church shall appear truly great and
honourable, v. 14. The people of the Jews, after their return out of captivity, by degrees became more considerable, and made a better figure, than one would have expected, after they had been so much reduced, and than any of the other nations recovered, that had been in like manner humbled by the Chaldeans. It is probable that many of those who had oppressed them in Babylon, when they were themselves driven out by the Persians, made their court to the Jews for a shelter, for they had no mind to scrape acquaintance with them. It is further fulfilled, when those that have been enemies to the church are wrought upon by the grace of God to see their error, and come, and join themselves to it; "The sons of them that afflicted thee, if not they themselves, yet their children, shall crouch to thee, shall beg pardon for their folly, and beg an interest in thy favour, and admission into thy family." 1 Sam. ii. 36. A promise like this is made to the church of Philadelphia, Rev. iii. 9. And it is intended to be, (1.) A mortification to the proud oppressors of the church, that have afflicted her, and despised her, and taken a pleasure in doing it; they shall be brought down, their spirits shall be broken, and their condition shall be so low, that they shall be obliged to the sons of them whom they have most studied to disoblige. Note, Sooner or later God will pour contempt upon those that put contempt upon his people. (2.) An exaltation to the poor, oppressed ones of the church; and this is the honour that shall be done them, they shall have an opportunity of doing good to those who have done evil to them, and saving those that have been despised and despised them. It is a pleasure to a good man, and he accounts it an honour, to show mercy to those with whom he has found no mercy. Yet this is not all; "They shall not only become suppliants to thee for their own interest, but they shall give honour to thee; they shall call thee, The city of the Lord; they shall at length be convinced that thou art a favourite of Heaven, and the particular care of the Divine Providence." That city is truly great and honourable, it is strong, it is rich, it is safe, it is beautiful, it is the most desirable place that can be to live in, which is the city of the Lord, which he owns, in which he dwells, in which religion is uppermost; such a one is Zion, it is the place which God has chosen, to put his name there, it is the Zion of the Holy One of Israel; therefore we may be sure, a holy city, else the Holy One of Israel would never be called the Patron of it.

15. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. 16. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breasts of kings: and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. 17. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exectors righteousness. 18. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders: but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. 19. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory; 20. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. 21. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. 22. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time.

The happy and glorious state of the church is here further foretold, referring principally and ultimately to the Christian church, and the spiritual peace of that; but under the type of that little glem of outward peace, which the Jews sometimes enjoyed after their return out of captivity. This is here spoken of,

1. As compared with what it had been; this made her peace and honour the more pleasant, that her condition had been much otherwise.

2. She had been despised; but, (v. 15.) she should be honoured, v. 15. Jerusalem had been forsaken and hated, abandoned by her friends, abhorred by her enemies, no man went through that desolate city, but declined it as a useful spectacle; it was an astonishment and hissing. But now it shall be made an eternal excellency, being returned from idolatry, and having recovered the tokens of God’s favour, and it shall be the joy of good people for many generations. Yet considering how short Jerusalem’s excellency was, and how short it came of the vast compass of this promise, we must look for the full accomplishment of it in the perpetual excellencies of the gospel-church, far exceeding those of the Old Testament church, and the glorious privileges and advantages of the Christian religion, which are indeed the joy of many generations.

Two things are here spoken of, as her excellency and joy, in opposition to her having been forsaken and hated. (1.) She shall find herself countenanced by her neighbours. The nations, and their kings, that are brought to embrace Christianity, shall lay themselves out for the good of the church, and maintain its interests, with the tenderness and affection that the nurse shows to the child at her breast; (v. 16.) “Thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles, and suck the breast of kings, that is, not suck their blood, that is not the spirit of the gospel; thou shalt suck the breast of kings, who shall be to thee as nursing fathers.” (2.) She shall find herself countenanced by her God; “Thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, shalt know it by experience; for such a salvation, such a redemption, shall be wrought out for thee, as plainly discovered itself to be the work of the Lord, the work of a mighty one, for it is a great salvation; of the Mighty One of Jacob, for it secures the welfare of all those that are Israelites indeed.” They before knew the Lord to be their God, now they knew him to be their Saviour, their Redeemer. Their Holy One now appears their Mighty One.

2. She had been impoverished, but now she shall be enriched. She that was the bread of Jacob to her better with her, v. 17. When those who were raised out of the dust are set among princes, instead of brass, they have money in their purses, they have gold and silver vessels in their houses instead of iron ones, and other improvements agreeable: so much shall the spiritual glory of the New Testament church exceed the external pomp and splendour of the Jewish economy, which had no glory in comparison with that which quite excels it. 2 Cor.
When we had baptism in the room of circumcision, the Lord's supper in the room of the passover, circumcision being the symbol of the gospel, God, being sufficient for it, provided it. A literal priesthood, we had gold instead of brass. Sin turned gold into brass, when Rehoboam made brazen shields instead of the golden ones he had pawned; but God's favour, when that returns, will turn brass again into gold.

3. She had been oppressed by her own princes, which was so sadly complained of, not only as her sin, but as a grievance of that kind shall be redressed; (v. 17.) "I will make thine officers peace; men of peace shall be made officers, and shall be indeed justices, not patrons of injustice, and justices of peace, not instruments of trouble and vexation. They shall be peace, they shall sincerely seek thy welfare, and by their means thou shalt enjoy good." They shall be peace, for they shall be righteous men, and then the peace is as a river, when the righteousness is as the waves of the sea. Even exactors, whose business it is to demand the public tribute, though they be exact, must not be exacting, but must be just to the subject as well as to the prince, and, according to the instructions John Baptist gave to the publicans, must exact no more than is appointed them, Luke x. 30.

4. She had been insulted by her neighbours, invaded, spoiled, and plundered; but now it shall be so no more; (v. 18.) "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land; neither the threats and triumphs of those that do violence, nor the outrights and complaints of those that suffer violence, shall again be heard, but every man shall peaceably enjoy his own. There shall be no wasting or destruction, either of persons or possessions, any where within thy borders, but thy walls shall be called salvation, they shall be safe, and means of safety to thee, and thy gates shall be praise, praise to thee, every one shall commend thee for the good condition they are kept in; and praise to thy God, who strengtheneth the bars of thy gates," Ps. cxlvii. 13. When God's salvation is upon the walls, it is fit that his praises should be in the gates, the places of concourse.

II. As completed in what it shall be: it should seem that in the close of this chapter we are directed to look further yet, as far forward as to the glory and happiness of heaven, under the type and figure of the flourishing state of the church on earth, which yet was never such as to come to any thing near to what is here foretold, and divers of the interpreters of this passage say, if we find in the description of the new Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 23. -xxii. 5. as the prophets sometimes insensibly pass from the blessings of the Jewish church to the spiritual blessings of the Christian church, which are eternal; so sometimes they rise from the church militant to the church triumphant, where, and where only, all the promised peace and joy and honour, that should be the church, are made perfect, and they are all righteous: they shall be entirely righteous, as there shall be none corrupt among them, so there shall be no corruption in them; the spirits of just men shall there be made perfect. And they shall be all the righteous, together, that shall replenish the New Jerusalem; it is called the congregation of the righteous. Ps. i. And because they are all righteous, therefore they shall inherit the land for ever, for nothing but sin can turn them out of it. The perfection of the saints' holiness secures the perpetuity of their happiness.

4. The glory of the church shall redound to the honour of the church's God; They shall appear to be the bud of the vineyard, as for a rose, and I will own them as such." It was by the grace of God that they were designed to this happiness; they are the branch of his planting, or of his plantations; he broke them off from the wild olive, and grafted them into the good olive; transplanted them out of the field, when they were as tender branches, into his nursery; that being now planted in his garden on earth, they might be removed to his paradise in heaven. It was by his grace likewise that they were prepared and fitted
tor this happiness; they are the work of his hands, (Eph. ii. 10.) are wrought to the selfsame thing, 2 Cor. iii. 5. It is a work of time, and, when it is
be finished, will appear a work of wonder; and God will be glorified, who began it, and carried it on; for the Lord Jesus will then be admired in all them that
believe. God will glorify himself in glorifying his chosen.

3. They will appear the more glorious, and God will be the more glorified in them, if we compare what they are, and what they were, when they are arrived at with the smallness of their beginning; (v. 22.) A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. The captives that returned out of Babylon strangely multiplied, and became a strong nation. The Christian church was a little one, a very small one at first, the number of their names was once but an hundred and twenty; yet it became a thousand; the stone cut out of the mountain without hands swelled so as to fill the earth. The triumphant church, and every glorified saint, will be a thousand out of a little one, a strong nation out of a small one. The grace and peace of the saints were at first like a grain of mustard seed; but they increase and multiply, and make a body of grace, every Christian, a child of David; when they come to heaven, and look back upon the smallness of their beginning, they will wonder how they got thither. And so wonderful is all this promise, that it needed the ratification with which it is closed; If the Lord will hasten it in his time—ill that is here said relating to the Jewish and Christian church, to the militant and triumphant church, and to every particular believer. (2.) It may seem too difficult to be brought about, and therefore may be despised of; but the God of almighty power has undertaken it; "I the Lord will do it, who can do it, and have determined to do it." It will be done by him whose power is irresistible, and his purposes unalterable. (2.) It may seem to be delayed, and put off; so long, that we are out of hopes of it; but as the Lord will do it, so he will hasten it, will do it with all convenient speed; though much time may be passed before it is done, no time shall be lost; he will hasten it in its time, in the proper time, in the season wherein it will be beautiful; he will do it in the time appointed by his wisdom, though not in the time prescribed by our folly. And he hath begun it; it may not seem to tarry, it does not tarry if it come in God's time; for we are sure that that is the best time, which he that believes will patiently wait for.

CHAP. LXI.

In this chapter, I. We are sure to find the grace of Christ, published by himself to a lost world in the everlasting gospel, under the type and figure of Isaiah's prophecy, which was to forecast the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon. We find the glorious church of Christ, its spiritual glories, described under the type and figure of the Jews' prosperity after their return out of their captivity. 1. It is promised that the dead shall be revived, and the dead bodies put on life; v. 2. They that shall be raised to life, shall be prefigured in the church, v. 5. 3. That the church shall be a royal priesthood, maintained by the riches of the Gentiles, v. 6. 4. That she shall have honour and joy in lieu of all her shame and sorrow, v. 7. 5. That her affairs shall prosper, v. 8. 6. That posterity shall enjoy these blessings, v. 9. 7. That righteousness and salvation shall be given, and the children of the Gentiles shall be instructed and made wise, v. 10, 11. If the Jewish church was ever thus blessed, much more shall the Christian church be so, and all that belong to it.

1. THE Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek;
ness, as it ought to be: to such Christ preached good tidings; and when he said, "Blessed are the meek."

2. He was called a Healer; he was sent to bind up the broken-hearted, as pained limbs are rolled to give them ease, as broken bones and bleeding wounds are bound up, that they may knit and close again. Those whose hearts are broken for sin, who are truly humbled under the sense of guilt and dread of wrath, are furnished in the gospel of Christ with that which will make them: can never forget the violent shocks of their own soul-conflict, the pains of a penitential contrition, may expect the pleasure of divine cordials and consolations.

3. He was to be a Deliverer; he was sent as a Prophet to preach, as a Priest to heal, and as a King to issue out proclamations; and those of two kinds; (1.) Proclamations of peace to his friends; He shall fill all the earth with the knowledge of his savour, (Isa. LI. 3), and the opening of the prison to them that were bound. Whereas by the guilt of sin we are bound over to the justice of God, are his lawful captives, sold for sin till payment be made of that great debt, Christ lets us know that he has made satisfaction to divine justice for that debt, that his satisfaction is accepted, and if we will plead that, and depend upon it, and make over our souls to God, he will take the yoke of sin, and to loose ourselves from those bands of our neck. The Son is ready by his Spirit to make us free; and we shall be free indeed, not only discharged from the miseries of captivity, but advanced to all the immunities and dignities of citizens. This is the gospel-proclamation, and it is like the blowing of the jubilee-trumpet, which proclaimed the great year of release, (Lev. xxv. 9, 40,) in allusion to which it is here called the acceptable year of the Lord, the time of our acceptance with God, which is the original of our liberties; or it is called the year of the Lord, because it publishes his free grace, to his own glory, and an acceptable year, because it brings glad tidings to us, and what cannot but be very acceptable to those who know the captivity and necessities of their own salvation.

(2.) Proclamations of war against his enemies. Christ proclaims the day of vengeance of our God; the vengeance he takes, [1.] On sin and Satan, death and hell, and all the powers of darkness, that were to be destroyed in order to our deliverance; these Christ triumphed over in his cross, having spoiled and weakened them, shamed them, and made a show of them openly, thereby taking off the enemy from the injury they had done both to God and man, Col. ii. 15. [2.] On those of the children of men, that stand it out against those fair offers; they shall not only be left, as they deserve, in their captivity, but be dealt with as enemies; we have the gospel summed up, Mark xvi. 16. There is part of it, He that believeth shall be saved, proclaims the acceptable year of our Lord, but there is part of it, He that believeth not shall be damned, proclaims the day of vengeance of our God, that vengeance which he will take of those that obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, 2 Thess. i. 8.

4. He was to be a Comforter, and so he is, as Prophet, Healer, and Deliverer; he is sent to comfort all who mourn, and who, mourning, seek to him, and not to the world, for comfort. Christ not only provides comfort for them, and proclaims it, but he applies it to them; he does by his Spirit comfort them. There is enough in him to comfort all who mourn, whatever their sore or sorrow is; but this comfort is sure to them who mourn in Zion, who sorrow after a godly sort, according to God, for his residence is in Zion; who mourn because of Zion's calamities and desolations, and mingle their tears by a holy sympathy with those of all God's suffering people, though they themselves are not in the same miserable condition. Yes, if such mourners he has comfort in store for. As blessings out of Zion are spiritual blessings, so mourners in Zion are holy mourners; such as carry their sorrows to the throne of grace, (for in Zion was the mercy-seat,) and pour them out as Haman did before the Lord. To such as these Christ has appointed by his gospel, and will give by his Spirit, (v. 3) those consolations which will not only support them under their sorrows, but turn them into songs of praise. He will give them, (1.) Beauty for ashes; whereas they lay in ashes, as was usual in times of great mourning, they shall not only be raised out of their dust, but made to look pleasant. Note, The holy cheerfulness of Christians is their beauty, and a great ornament to their profession. There is an ornament of vanity to the sinner, and an ornament of beauty to the saint. He will give them peace, beauty for ashes, he will turn their sorrow into joy, as quickly and easily as you can transpone a letter; for he speaks, and it is done. (2.) The oil of joy, which makes the face to shine, instead of mourning, which disguises the countenance, and makes it unlovely. This oil of joy the saints have from that oil of gladness which Christ himself was anointed above his fellows, Heb. i. 9. (3.) The garments of praise, such beautiful garments as were worn on thanksgiving days, instead of the spirit of heaviness, dimness, or contraction; open joys for secret mourners. The spirit of heaviness they keep to themselves; (Zion's mourners were in secret;) but the joy they are recompensed with, they are clothed with, as with a garment in the eye of others. Observe, Where God gives the oil of joy, he gives the garment of praise. Those comforts which come from God, dispose the heart to, and enlarge the heart in, thanksgivings to God. Whatever we have the joy of, God must have the praise and glory of.

5. He was to be a Planter; for the church is God's husbandry. Therefore he will do all this for his people, will cure their wounds, release them of bondage, support them in afflictions, and as it were glory in them, that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that they may be such, and be acknowledged to be such; that they may be ornaments to God's vineyard, and may be fruitful in the fruits of righteousness, as the branches of God's planting, ch. lx. 21. All that Christ does for us, is to make us God's people, and so very serviceable to him as the fruitful branches of his planting. If he plant us in the house of the Lord, and flourishing in the courts of our God; and all this, that he may be glorified; that we may be brought to glorify him by a sincere devotion and an exemplary conversation; for herein is our Father glorified, that we bring forth much fruit; and that others also may take occasion from God's favour shining on his people, and his grace shining in him, to praise and honour him, and that he might be for ever glorified in his saints.

4. And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolated, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. 5. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your ploughmen, and your vine-dressers. 6. But
ye shall be named the priests of the Lord; 

no shall call you the ministers of our God: 
ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and 

in their glory shall you boast yourselves. 7. 

For your shame you shall have double, and 

for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double; everlasting joy shall be unto them. 8. For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt-offering; and 

I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. 9. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed.

Promises are here made to the Jews now returned out of captivity, and settled again in their own land, which they were to continue in, and which all believers, who through grace are delivered out of spiritual thraldom; for they are capable of being spiritually applied.

1. It is promised that their houses shall be rebuilt, (v. 4.) that their cities shall be raised out of the ruins in which they had long lain, and be fitted up for their use again; They shall build the waste cities, which the gentiles have broken down, and has no walls, like a city that is broken down, and has no walls, like a city in ruins; but by the power of Christ's gospel and grace it is repaired, it is put in order again, and fitted to be an habitation of God through the Spirit. And they shall do this, they that are released out of captivity: for we are brought out of the house of bondage, that we may serve God, both in building up ourselves to his glory, and in helping to build up his church on earth.

2. They that were so lately servants themselves, working for their oppressors, and lying at their mercy, shall now have servants to do their work for them and be at their command; not of their brethren, (they are all the Lord's freemen,) but of the strangers, and the sons of the alien, who shall keep their sheph, till their gained and great of their doings, the ancient employments of Abel, Cain, and Adam; Strangers shall feed your flocks, v. 5. When, by the grace of God, we attain to a holy indifference as to all the affairs of this world, buying as though they possessed not, when, though our hands are employed about them, our hearts are not entangled with them, but reserved entire for God and his service, then the sons of the alien are our ploughmen and vine-dressers.

3. They shall not only be released out of their captivity, but highly preferred, and honourably employed; (v. 6.) "While the strangers are keeping your flocks, you shall be keeping the charge of the sanctuary; instead of being slaves to your taskmasters, you shall be named the priests of the Lord, a high and holy calling." Priests were princes' peers, and in Hebrew were called by the same name. You shall be the ministers of our God, as the Levites were. Note, Those whom God sets at liberty, he sets to work: he delivers them out of the hands of their enemies, that they may serve him,

Luke i. 74, 75. Ps. cxvi. 16. But his service is perfect freedom, may, it is the greatest honour. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, he took them to be to him a kingdom of priests, Exod. xix. 6. And the gospel-church is a royal priesthood, 1 Pet. ii. 9. All believers are made to our God kings and priests; and they ought to conduct themselves as such in their devotion and in their whole conversation, with holiness to the Lord written upon their foreheads, that men may call them the priests of the Lord.

4. The wealth and honour of the Gentile converts shall redound to the benefit and credit of the church, v. 6. The Gentiles shall be brought into the church, those that were strangers shall become fellow-citizens with the saints, and with themselves they shall bring all they have, to be devoted to the glory of God, and used in his service; and the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall have the advantage of it. It will be a great strengthening and quickening, as well as a comfort and encouragement, to all good Christians, to see the Gentiles serving the interest of God's kingdom. (1.) They shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, not which they have themselves possessed, nor which they have inherited, but which they shall bring all they have, to be devoted to the glory of God, and used in his service; and the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall have the advantage of it. (2.) They shall boast themselves in their sect, when their sand is made iti, shall be very much for the glory of God, and therefore all good men shall glory in it.

5. They shall have abundance of comfort and satisfaction in their own bosoms; (v. 7.) the Jews, no doubt, were thus privileged after their return; they were in a new world, and now knew how to value their liberty and property, the pleasures of which were continually to be the children of the Most High, who do all those rejoice, whom Christ has brought into the glorious liberty of God's children, especially when the privileges of their adoption shall be completed in the resurrection of the body. (1.) They shall rejoice in their portion; they shall not only have their own again, but (which is a further gift of God) they shall have the comfort of it, and a heart to rejoice in it, Ezek. iii. 12. Though the houses of the returned Jews, as well as their temple, be much inferior to what they were before the captivity, yet they shall be well pleased with them, and thankful for them. It is a portion in their land, their own land, the Holy land, Immanuel's land, and therefore they shall rejoice in it, having so lately known what it was to be strangers in a strange land. They that have God and heaven for their portion, have reason to say that they have a worthy portion, and to rejoice in it. (2.) Everlasting joy shall be unto them; a joyful state of their people, which shall last long, much longer than the captivity had lasted. Yet that joy of the Jewish nation was so much allayed, so often interrupted, and so soon brought to a close, that we must look for some accomplishment of this promise in the spiritual joy which believers have in God, and the eternal joy they hope for in heaven. (3.) This shall be a double recompense to them, and more than double, for all the reproach and vexation they have lain under in
ISAIAH, LXI.

the land of their captivity: "For your shame you shall have double honour, and in your land you shall possess double wealth, to what you lost; the blessing of God upon it, and the comfort you shall have in it, shall make an abundant reparation for all the damages you have received. You shall be owned not only as God's sons, but as his first-born, (Exod. iv. 22.) and therefore entitled to a double portion. As the miseries of their captivity were great, the rest of their lives should have received double for all their sins, (ch. xi. 2.) so the joys of their return shall be so great, that in them they shall receive double for all their shame. The former is applicable to the fulness of Christ's satisfaction, in which God received double for all their sins; the latter to the fulness of heaven's joys, in which we shall receive more than double for all our service and sufferings. Justly doth this; when God turned again his captivity, he gave him twice as much as he had before.

6. God will be their faithful Guide, and a God in covenant with them; (v. 8.) I will direct their work in truth. God by his providence will order their affairs for the best, according to the word of his truth; he will guide them in the way of truth; and true prosperity comes with grace: the works of good people are right: God will direct the works of good people right way, the true way that leads to happiness; he will direct them to be done in sincerity, and then they are pleasing to him. God desires truth in the inward parts: and if we do our works in truth, he will make an everlasting covenant with us, for those that walk before him and are upright, he will certainly be a God all-sufficient. Now and again, both of this and of the foregoing promise, that God will recompense them double for their shame, those words come in the former part of the verse, I the Lord love judgment: he loves that judgment should be done among men, both between magistrates and subjects, and between neighbour and neighbour, and therefore he hates all injustice; and when wrongs are done to his people by their oppressors and persecutors, he is displeased with them, not only because they are done to his people, but because they are wrongs, and against the eternal rules of equity. If men do not do justice, he loves to do judgment himself, in relating them that suffer wrong, and punishing them that do it. God pleads his people's injured cause, not only because he is jealous for them, but because he is glorious for the truth. Thus, it is evident that he hates robbery for burnt-offering; he hates injustice even in his own people, that honour him with what they have in their burnt-offerings, much more does he hate it when it is against his own people; he is justly displeased with humble offerings, much more when it is for burnt-offerings to idols, and when not only his people are robbed of their gifts, but their persecutors. It is a truth much to the honour of God, that ritual services will never atone for the violation of moral precepts, nor will it justify any man's robbery to say, "It was for burnt-offerings;" or Corban—It is a gift. Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, to do justly and love mercy better than thousands of rams; nay, that robbery is most hateful to God, which is offered to idolatry, with this parenthesis of God is the Patron of unrighteousness. Some make this the reason of the rejection of the Jews, upon the bringing in of the Gentiles, (v. 6.) because they were so corrupt in their morals, and while they tithed mint and cummin, made nothing of judgment and mercy; (Matth. xxiii. 23.) whereas God loves judgment, and is pleas'd upon that, burnt-offerings, and burnt-offerings for robbery too, as that of the Pharisees, who made long offerings, that they might the more pleas'dly devour sugar? houses. Others read these words thus, I hate rapeine by iniquity, the spoil which the enemies of God's people had unjustly made of them; God hated this, and therefore would rejoin with them for it.

7. God will entail a blessing upon their posterity after them; (v. 9.) Their seed, the children of these persons themselves that are now the blessed of the Lord, or their successors in profession, the church's seed, shall have double of all their father's sins, Ps. xxvii. 1. (1.) They shall signalize themselves, and make their neighbours to take notice of them; they shall be known among the Gentiles; shall distinguish themselves by the gravity, seriousness, humility, and cheerfulness of their conversation, especially by that brotherly love by which all men shall know them to be Christ's disciples. And they thus distinguishing themselves, God shall bless them, by making them the blessings of their agr. and instruments of his glory, and by giving them remarkable tokens of his favour, which shall make them eminent, and gain them respect from all about them. Let the children of godly parents love in such a manner that they may be known to be such, that all who observe them may see in them the fruits of a good education, and an answer to the prayers that were put up for them; and then they may expect that God will make them known, by the fulfilling of that promise to them, that the generation of the upright shall be blessed. (2.) God shall have the glory of this, for every one shall attribute it to the blessing of God; all that see them shall see so much of the grace of God in them, and his favour toward them, that they shall acknowledge them to be the seed which the Lord has blessed, and doth bless, for it includes both. See what it is to be blessed of God. Whatever good appears in any, it must be token notice of as the fruit of God's blessing, and he must be glorified in it.

10. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. 11. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

Some make this the song of joy and praise to be sung by the prophet in the name of Jerusalem, congratulating her on the happy change of her circumstances in the accomplishment of the foregoing promises; others make it to be spoken by Christ in the name of the New Testament church triumphing in gospel grace. We may take in both, the former a type of the latter. We are here taught to rejoice with holy joy, to God's honour.

1. In the beginning of this good work, the clothing of the church with righteousness and salvation; (v. 10.) Upon this account I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. These that rejoice in God have cause to rejoice greatly, and we need not fear running into an extreme in the greatness of our joy, when we make God the Gladness of our joy. The first gospel song begins like this, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and rejoiced in God my Saviour, Luke i. 46, 47. There is just matter for this joy, and all the reason in the world why it should terminate in God, for salvation and righteousness—"
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1. For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof, as a lamp that burneth. 2. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. 3. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. 4. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken: neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Heplezibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. 5. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

The prophet here tells us,

1. What he will do for the church. A prophet, as he is a seer, so he is a spokesman. This prophet here resolves to perform that office faithfully, v. 1. He will not hold his peace, he will not rest; he will never cease to speak. His business, he will take pains, and never desire to take his ease; and herein he was a type of Christ, who was indefatigable in executing the office of a prophet, and made it his meat and drink till he had finished his work. Observe here, 1. What the prophet's resolution is; He will not hold his peace, he will continue instant in prayer; not only faithfully deliver, but frequently repeat, the messages he has received from the Lord. If people receive not the precepts and promises at first, he will inculcate them, and give them line upon line; and he will continue instant in prayer, he will never hold his peace at the throne of grace, till he has prevailed with God for the mercies promised; he will give himself to prayer, and to the ministry of the word, as Christ's ministers must, (Acts xii. 4.) who must labour frequently in both, and be never weary of this his work. The business of ministers is to speak from God to his people, and to God for his people: and in neither of these must they be silent. 2. What is the principle of this resolution—for Zion's sake, and for Jerusalem's; not for the sake of any private interest of his own, but for the church's sake, because he has an affection and concern for Zion, and it lies near his heart. Whatever he prevented God from doing in his family, he desires to see the good of Jerusalem, and resolves to seek it all the days of his life, Ps. cxxx. 8, 9. It is God's Zion, and his Jerusalem, and it is therefore dear to him, because it is so to God, and because God's glory is interested in its prosperity. 3. How long he resolves to continue this importunity till the promise of the church's righteousness and salvation is accomplished. The business of this chapter, be accomplished. Isaiah will not himself live to see the release of the captives out of Babylon, much less the bringing in of the gospel, in which grace reigns through righteousness unto life and salvation, yet he will not hold his peace till these be accomplished, even the utmost of them, because his prophecies will continue speaking of these things, and there shall in every age be a remnant that shall continue to pray for them, as

...
successors to him, till the promises be performed,
and so the prayers answered that were girded upon them. Then the church's righteousness and salvation
will go forth as brightness, and as a lamp that burns; so plainly, that it will carry its own
evidence along with it; it will bring honour and comfort to the church, which will hereupon both look
pleasant and appear illustrious; and it will bring instruction and direction to the world, a light not only
to the eyes but to the feet, and to the faith of those who before sat in darkness and in the shadow
of death.

II. What God will do for the church; the prophet
can but pray and preach, but God will confirm the
word, and answer the prayers.
1. The church shall be greatly admired; when
that righteousness which is her salvation, her praise,
and the church's delight, should be revealed, God
shall see it. The tiding of it shall be carried to the
Gentiles, and a tender of it made them; they may
so see this righteousness as to share in it, if it be not
their own fault; "Even kings shall see and be in
love with the glory of thy righteousness," (v. 2.)
shall overlook the glory of their own courts and
kingdoms, and look at, and look after, the spiritual
glory of another, that will exceed it.
2. She shall be truly admirable. Great names
make men considered in the world, and great re-
spect is paid them thereupon; now it is agreed, that
Honour est in honore—Honour is to be estimated
by the character and condition of him who confers
it. God is the Fountain of honour, and from him
the church's honour comes; Thou shall be called
by a new name, a pleasant name, such as God
ever called by before, no, not in the day of thy
greatest prosperity, and the reverse of that which
thou wast called by in the day of thine affliction;
thou shalt have a new character, be advanced to a
new dignity, and those about thee shall have new
thoughts of thee." This seems to be alluded to in
that promise (Rev. ii. 17.) of the white stone, and
in the stone a new name, and that (Rev. iii. 12.) of
the name of the city of my God, and my new name.
It is a name which the mouth of the Lord shall
name, who, we are sure, miscalls nothing, and who
will oblige others to call her by the name he has
given her; for his judgment is according to truth,
and all shall concur with it sooner or later. Two
names God shall give her.
(1.) He shall call her his crown; (v. 3.) Thou shalt
be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, not
on his head, as adding any real honour or power to
him, as crowns do to those that are crowned with
them, but in his hand; he is pleased to account
them, and show them forth, as a glory and beauty
to him. When he took them to be his people, it
was that they might be unto him for a name, and
for a praise, and for a glory; (Jer. xiii. 1.)
"Thou shalt be a crown of glory and a royal diadem,
through the hand, the good hand, of thy God
upon thee; he shall make thee so, for he shall be
to thee a Crown of glory, ch. xxviii. 5. Thou
shall be so in his hand, under his protection; he
that shall put glory upon thee, shall create a de-
ference upon all that glory, so that the flowers
of thy crown shall never be withered, nor its jewels
lost.
(2.) He shall call her his spouse; (v. 4, 5.) this
is a yet greater honour, especially considering what
a forlorn condition she had been in. [1.] Her case
had been very melancholy; she was called for-
saken, and her land desolate, during the captivity,
like a woman reproachfully divorced, or left a dis-
consolate widow. Such was the state of religion in
this land before the preaching of the gospel—It is
in a manner forsaken and desolate, a thing that no
man looked after, or had any real concern for;

[2.] It should now be very pleasant, for God would
return in mercy to her. Instead of those two names
of reproach, she shall be called by two honourable
names. First, She shall be called Hephzibah, which
signifies, My delight is in her; it was the name of
Hezekiah's queen, Manasseh's mother: (2 Kings
xxi. 1.) a proper name for a wife, who ought to be
her husband's delight, Prov. v. 19. And here it is
the church's Maker, that is her Husband; The
Husband of the bride, and the Lord God of the bride
by his grace; he hath wrought that in his church, which makes her
delight, she being refined, and reformed, and
brought home to him; and then by his providence
he does that for her, which makes it appear that she
is his delight, and that he delights to do her good.
Secondly, She shall be called Beulah, which signi-
ifies married, whereas she had been desolate, a con-
dition opposed to that of the married wife; (ch. ix.
1.) "Thy land shall be married; it shall become
fruitful again, and be replenished." Though she has
long been barren, she shall again be peopled, shall
again be made to keep house, and to be a joyful
mother of children, Ps. xxviii. 9. She shall be mar-
rried, For, 1. Her sons shall heartily espouse the
land of their nativity and its interests, which they had for
a time been dissatisfied at, and have now a com-
fortable enjoyment of it; Thy sons shall marry
thee, they shall live with thee, and take delight in thee;
when they were in Babylon, they seemed to have
espoused that land, for they were appointed to set-
tle, and to seek the peace of it, Jer. xxxix. 5—7.
But now they shall again marry their own land, as
a young man marries a virgin that he takes great
light in, it is extremely fond of, and he has many
children by it. It bodes well to a land, when
its own natives and inhabitants are pleased with it,
prefit it before other lands, when its princes marry
their country, and resolve to take their lot with it.
2. Her God (this is much better) shall betroth her to
herself in righteousness, Hosea ii. 19, 20. He will
take pleasure in his church; As the bridegroom re-
juses over the bride, is pleased with his relation to
her and her affection to him, so shall thy God re-
jourse over thee, he shall rest in his love to thee,
(Zeph. iii. 17.) he shall take pleasure in thee, (Ps.
exlvii. 11.) and shall delight to do thee good with his
whole heart and his whole soul, Jer. xxxii. 41. This
is very applicable to the love Christ has for his
church, and for the complacency he takes in it;
which appears so bright in Solomon's Song, and
which will be complete in heaven.

6. I have set watchmen upon thy walls,
O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their
peace day nor night: ye that make mention of
the Lord, keep not silence; 7. And give
him no rest, till he establish, and till he
make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. 8.
The Lord hath sworn by his right hand,
and by the arm of his strength, Surely I
will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine
enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall
not drink thy wine for the which thou
hast laboured: 9. But they that have gath-
ered it shall eat it, and praise the Lord,
and they that have brought it together
shall drink it in the courts of my holiness.

Two things are here promised to Jerusalem.
1. Plenty of the means of grace—abundance of
good preaching and good praying; (v. 6, 7) and this
shows the method God takes when he designs mercy
for a people; he first brings them to their duty, and
pours out a spirit of prayer upon them, and then brings salvation to them. Provision is made,
1. That ministers may do their duty as watchmen; it is here spoken of as a token of good,
step toward further mercy, and an earnest of it, that, in order to what he designed for them, he
would set watchmen on their walls, who should ne-
ver hold their peace. Note, (1.) Ministers are
watchmen on the church's walls, for it is as a city
besieged, whose concern it is to have sentinels on
the walls, to take notice, and give notice of, the
movement of the enemy. They have a charge to keep
watchmen, they be wakeful and faithful, and will-
ing to endure hardness. (2.) They are concerned
to stand upon their guard day and night; they must
never be off their watch, as long as those whose
souls they watch, are not out of danger. (3.) They
must never hold their peace, they must take all
opportunities to give warning to sinners, in season,
out of season, and must never betray the cause
of Christ by a treacherous or cowardly silence; they
must never hold their peace at the throne of grace,
they must pray and not faint, as Moses lifted up
his hands, and kept them steady, till Israel had got
the victory over Amalek, Exod. xvii. 10, 12.
2. That people may do their duty. As those
that make mention of the Lord, let not them keep
silence, but as they should make mention of the Lord,
watchmen pray for them, but let them pray them-
seves; all will be little enough to meet the approaching
mercy with due solemnity. Note, (1.) It is the
character of God's professing people, that they may
make mention of the Lord, and continue to do so
even in bad times, when the land is termed forsaken
desolate; they are the Lord's remembrancers; (so the
margin reads it) they remember the Lord themselves,
and put one another in mind of him. (2.) God's professing
people must be a praying people, must be public-spirited in prayer, must
wrestle with God in prayer, and continue to do so;
"Keep not silence, never grow remiss in the duty,
or weary of it," Give him no rest—alluding to an
importunate beggar, to the widow that with her
continual coming wore the judge into a compliance.
God said to Moses, Let me alone; (Exod.
xxxii. 10.) and Jacob to Christ, I will not let thee
go except thou bless me, Gen. xxxii. 26. (3.) God is
so far from being displeased with our pressing
importunity, as men commonly are, that he invites and
encourages it, he bids us to cry after him; he is
not like those disciples who discouraged a puti-
ting child. He loves to hear from his people, and
applications at the throne of grace, and give him
no rest, Luke xi. 5, 6. He suffers himself not only
to be reasoned with, but to be wrestled with. (4.)
The public welfare and prosperity of God's Jerusa-
lem is that which we should be most importunate
for at the throne of grace; we should pray for the
good of the church, [1.] That it may be safe, that
he should be their shield, that they may have the
church may be firm, may be settled for the present,
and secured to posterity. [2.] That it may be
great, may be a praise in the earth; that it may
be praised, and God may be praised for it. When
ghost-truths are cleared and vindicated, when
gospel-ordinances are duly administered in their
proper power, when the church becomes emi-
nent for holiness and power, it is the way of God
to make it known in the earth, then it is in reputation.
[5.] We must persevere in our prayers for mercy to the
church, till the mercy comes; we must do as the prophet's
servant did, go yet seven times, till the promising
cloud appear, 1 Kings xviii. 44. (6.) It is a good
sign that God is coming toward a people in ways
of mercy, when he pours out a spirit of prayer upon
them, and stirs them up to be fervent and constant
in their intercessions.

II. Plenty of all other good things, v. 8. This
follows upon the former; when the people praise
God, when all the people praise him, then shall the
c rod hold her sword, (Ps. lxxv. 5, 6;) and outward
prosperity, even outward prosperity of the poor, shall
be a praise to Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Observe,
1. The great distress they had been in, and the losses they
had sustained; their corn had been meat for them-
seves and their families; here was a double griev-
ance, that they themselves wanted that which was
necessary to the support of life, and were in danger
of being starved out. By the blessing of it, we see that their
enemies were strengthened by it, had the more means
with it, and so were the better able to do them a mis-
chief. God is said to give their corn to their en-
emies, because he not only permitted it, but ordered
it, to be the just punishment both of their abuse of
plenty, and of their symbolizing with strangers, ch.
7. The wine which they had laboured for, and
which in their affliction they needed, for the relief
of those among them that were of a heavy heart,
strangers drink it, to gratify their lusts with; this
sore judgment was threatened for their sins, Lev.
xxvii. 16. Deut. xxviii. 33. See how uncertain our
creature-comforts are, and how much it is our wis-
dom to labour for that meat which we cannot robbery
of. 2. The great fulness and satisfaction
which they had, through God's mercy to them,
they had gathered a new harvest, and you have
gathered it shall it eat, and praise the Lord.
See here, (1.) God's mercy in giving plenty, and
peace to enjoy it; that the earth yields her increase,
that there are hands to be employed in gathering it
in, and that they are not taken off by plague and
sickness, or otherwise employed in war; that stran-
gers and enemies do not come, and gather it for
themselves, or take it from us when we have gath-
ered it, that we eat the labour of our hands;
and the bread is not eaten out of our mouths, and
especially, that we have opportunity and a heart to ho-
 nour God with it, and that his courts are open
to us, and we are not restrained from attending on
him in them. (2.) Our duty in the enjoyment of this
mercy; we must gather what God gives, with care
and industry, we must eat it freely and cheerfully,
not bury the gifts of God's bounty, but make use of
them; we must, when we have eaten and are full,
bless the Lord, and give him thanks for his bounty
to us, and we must serve him with our abundance,
use it in works of piety and charity, eat it and
drink it in the courts of his holiness, where the
altar, the priest, and the poor, must all have their
share. Thus, in the fulness of God's good man has
in his meat and drink is that it furnishes him with
a meat-offering and a drink-offering for the Lord
his God; (Job i. 14.) the greatest comfort that he
has in an estate is, that it gives him an opportunity
of honouring God and doing good. This wine is to
be drunk in the courts of God's holiness, and there
more moderately and with sobriety, as before the
altar of God, Ps. xcv. 9. 3. The outward testimonies
of God's power and goodness in the fulness of his
power; The Lord has sworn by his right hand and by the arm
of his strength, that he will do this for his people;
God confirms it by an oath, that his people, who
trust in him and his word, may have strong con-
solation, Heb. vi. 17, 18. And since he can swear
by no greater, he swears by himself; sometimes by his
being, As I live (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) sometimes by
his power, Ps. cxlv. 9. and by the arm of his
right hand, (which was lifted up in swearing,
Deut. xxxi. 40.) and his arm of power; for it is
a great satisfaction to those who build their hopes on
God's promise, to be sure that what he has promised
he is able to perform, Rom. iv. 21. To assure us
of this, he has sworn by his strength, pawning the
reputation of his omnipotence upon it; if he did not
do it, let it be said, It was because he could not,
which the Egyptians shall never say, (Sumb. xiv.
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16.) nor any other. It is the comfort of God’s people, that his power is engaged for them; his right hand, where the Mediator sits.

10. Go through, go through the gates; prepare you the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. 11. Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. 12. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.

This, as many like passages before, refers to the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, and, under the type and figure of that, to the great redemption wrought out by Jesus Christ, and the proclaiming of great salvation by the Saviour through him.

1. Way shall be made for this salvation; all difficulties shall be removed, and whatever might obstruct it shall be taken out of the way, v. 10. The gates of Babylon shall be thrown open, that they may with freedom go through them; the way from Babylon to the land of Israel shall be prepared, caseways shall be made and cast up through wet and rough places, thorns gathered out of places rough and rocky; in the convenient places appointed for their rendezvous, standards shall be set up for their direction and encouragement, that they may embody for their greater safety. Thus John Baptist was sent to prepare the way of the Lord, Matth. iii. 3. And before Christ by his graces and comforts comes to any for salvation, preparation is made for him by repentance, which is called the preparation of the gospel of grace; (Eph. vi. 13.) here the way is levelled by it, there the feet are shod with it, which comes all to one, for both are in order to a journey.

2. Notice shall be given of this salvation, v. 11, 12. It shall be proclaimed to the captives, that they are set at liberty, and may go if they please; it shall be proclaimed to their neighbours, to all about them, to the end of the world, that God hath pleaded Zion’s just, injured, and despised cause. Let it be said to Zion, for her comfort, Behold, thy salvation cometh, thy Saviour, who brings salvation; he will bring such a work, such a reward, in this salvation, as shall be admired by all; a reward of comfort and peace with him; but a work of humiliation and reformation before him, to prepare his people for the remission of their sufferings; and then with reference to each, it follows, they shall be called, The holy people, and The redeemed of the Lord; the work before him, which shall be wrought in them and upon them, shall denominate them a holy people, cured of their inclination to idolatry, and consecrated to God only; and the reward with him, the deliverance wrought for them, shall denote that the redeemer of the Lord, so redeemed as none but God could redeem them; and redeemed to be his, their bonds loosed, that they might be his servants. Jerusalem shall then be called, Sought out, a city not forsaken; she had been forsaken for many years, there were neither traders nor worshippers that inquired the way to Jerusalem as formerly, when it was frequented by both; but now God will again make it considerable; it shall be sought out, visited, resorted to, and court made to it, as much as ever. When it is called a holy city, then it is called sought out, for holiness puts an honour and beauty upon any place or person, which draws respect, and makes them to be admired, beloved, and inquired after.

But this, being proclaimed to the end of the world, must have a reference to the gospel of Christ, which was to be preached to every creature; and it speaks, (1.) The glory of Christ. It is published immediately to the church, but is thence echoed to every nation, and must spread from people to people, till Christ is not only the Saviour, but the Salvation itself; for the happiness of believers is not only from him, but in him, ch. xii. 2. His salvation consists both in the work and in the reward which he brings with him; for those that are his shall neither be idle, nor lose their labour. (2.) The beauty of the church. Christians shall be called saints, (1 Cor. i. 2.) the holy people, the elect of God, and called to salvation; through sanctification; they shall be called the redeemed of the Lord, to him they owe their liberty, and therefore to him they owe their service, and they shall not be ashamed to own both. None are to be called the redeemed of the Lord, but those that are the holy people; the people of God’s purchase is a holy nation. And they shall be called, Sought out; God will seek them out, and find them, wherever they are; they are, in effect, as a despised flower, which shall be sought, shall seek them out, that they may join themselves to them, and not forsake them. It is good to associate with the holy people, that we may learn their ways, and with the redeemed of the Lord, that we may share in the blessings of the redemption.

CHAP. LXIII.

In this chapter, we have, I. God coming towards his people in ways of mercy and deliverance, and this is to be joined to the close of the foregoing chapter, where it was said to Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; and now it is said, this is to be the salvation of the Lord, and in the ways of God. II. God’s people meeting him with their devotions, and addressing themselves to him with suitable affections; and this part of the chapter is carried on to the close of the next. In this, we have, 1. A thankful acknowledgment of the great favours God had bestowed upon them, v. 7. 2. The magnifying of these favours, from the consideration of God’s relation to them, (v. 8.) his compassionate concern for them, (v. 9.) their unworthiness, (v. 10.) and the occasion which it gave both him and them to call to mind former mercies, v. 11. 14. 3. A very humble and earnest prayer to God to appear for them in their present distress, pleading God’s mercy, (v. 12.) their relation to him, (v. 16.) their desire toward him, (v. 17.) and the insulance of their enemies, v. 18, 19. So that, upon the whole, we learn to embrace God’s promises with an active faith, and then to observe, and make use of them, both in prayers and praises.

1. WHO is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. 2. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? 3. I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury: and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. 4. For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. 5. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury, it upheld me. 6. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and
make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.

It is a glorious victory that is here inquiries into first, and then accounted for; 1. It is a victory obtained by the providence of God over the enemies of Israel; or, rather, says someone, over Cyrus conquered, and God by him, and they will have the prophet to make the first discovery of him in his triumphant return, when he is in the country of Edom: but this can by no means be admitted, because the country of Babylon is always spoken of as the land of the north, whereas Edom lays south from Jerusalem, so that the conqueror over the Babylonians, or at least over them, is admitted, which victory therefore is obtained over the Edomites themselves, who had triumphed in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, (Ps. cxxxvi. 7.) and cut off those who, making their way as far as they could from the enemy, escaped to the Edomites, (Obed. xiii. 13.) and were therefore reckoned with when Babylon was; for, no doubt, that prophecy was accomplished, though we do not meet in history with the accomplishment of it. (Jer. xliv. 13.) Bozrah shall become a desolation. Yet this victory over Edom is put as an instance or specimen of the like victories, obtained over other nations that had been enemies to Israel: this over the Edomites is named, for the sake of the old enmity against Jacob, (Gen. xxvii. 41.) and perhaps to distinguish it from the victories against the Edomites, by which it should seem, more than by any other of his victories, he got him a name, Ps. ix. title, 2 Sam. vii. 13, 14. But this is not all; 2. It is a victory obtained by the grace of God in Christ over our spiritual enemies; we find the garments dipped in blood adorning him whose name is called The Word of God, Rev. xiv. 13. The same, we may suppose, whom we are more than conquerors over those principalities and powers which on the cross he spoiled and triumphed over.

In this representation of the victory, we have,

1. An amusing question put to the Conqueror, v. 1, 2. It is put by the church, or by the prophet in the name of the church. He sees a mighty Hero red with the spoils of his conquered enemies, and makes bold to ask him two questions; 1. Who is he? He observes him to come from the country of Edom, to come in such apparel as was glorious to a soldier, not embroidered or laced, but besmeared with blood and dirt: he observes him to come as one either frightened or fatigued, but that he travels in the greatness of his strength, altogether unbroken.

Triumphant and victorious he appears,
And honour in his looks and habit wears:
How strong he treads, how stately doth he go!
Pompous and solemn is his pace,
And full of majesty, his face.

Who is this mighty hero—who? Mr. Norris.

The question, Who is this? perhaps means the same with that which Joshua put to the same Person, when he appeared to him with his sword drawn? (Josh. v. 14.) Art thou for us or for our adversaries? Or rather, the same with that which Israel put in a way of adoration, (Exod. xvi. 11.) Who is a God like unto thee? 2. The other question is, "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel? What hard service hast thou been engaged in, that thou carriest with thee these marks of toil and danger?" Is it possible that one who has such majesty and terror in Israel; over whom the name should be employed in the mean and servile work of "treating the wine-press?" Surely it is not. That which is really the glory of the Redeemer seems primâ facie—at first, a disparagement to him, as it would be to a mighty prince to do the work of the vine-dressers and husbandmen; for he took upon him the form of a servant, and carried with him the marks of servitude.

2. An admirable answer returned by him: 1. He tells who he is; I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. He is the Saviour. God was Israel's Saviour out of the hand of their oppressors; the Lord Jesus is ours; his name, Jesus, signifies a Saviour, for he saves his people from their sins. In the salvation of his people he is triumphant. (1.) Of the truth of his promise, which is therein performed; he speaks in righteousness, and will therefore make good every word to his people. He has spoken, with which he will have us to compare what he does; that, setting the word and the work the one over against the other, what he does may ratify what he has said, and will that he was said may be fulfilled, which is the office of both the persons. (2.) Of the efficacy of his power, which is therein exerted; he is mighty to save, able to bring about the promised redemption, whatever difficulties and oppositions may lie in the way of it.

To I who to my promise faithful stand,
I who the powers of death, hell, and the grave,
Have bold'd with this all-conquering hand,
I, who most ready am, and mighty too, to save.

Mr. Norris.

2. He tells how he came to appear in this lude; (v. 5.) I have trodden the wine-press alone. Being compared to one that treads in the wine-fate, such is his condensation, in the midst of his triumphs, that he does not seem the comparison, but admits it, and carries it on. He does indeed tread the wine-press, but it is the great wine-press of the soul of God, (Rev. xiv. 19.) which was made to be cast anew, to have been cast; but Christ was pleased to cast our enemies into it, and to destroy him that had the power of death, that he might deliver us. And of this, the bloody work which God sometimes made among the enemies of the Jews, and which is here foreshadowed, was a type and figure.

He, the Conqueror, who has the account of the Conqueror gives of his victory.

(1.) He gains the victory purely by his own strength; I have trodden the wine-press alone, v. 5. When God delivered his people, and destroyed their enemies, if he made use of instruments, he did not need them; but among his people, for whom the salvation was to be wrought, no assistance offered itself: they were weak, and helpless, and had no ability to do anything for the salvation of their souls; they were desponding and listless, and had no heart to do any thing; they were not disposed to give the last stroke or struggle for liberty; neither the captives themselves, nor any of their friends for them; (v. 5.) "I looked, and there was none to help, as one would have expected, nothing of a bold, active spirit appeared among them; nay, there were not only none to lead, but, which was more strange, there was none to uphold, none that would come in as a second, that had the courage to join with Cyrus against their oppressors; therefore mine arm brought about the salvation; not by created might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, my own arm." Note, God can help, when all other helpers fail; but, that is his time to help, and therefore for that very reason he will put forth his own power to work it the more gloriously. But this is most fully applicable to Christ's victories over our spiritual enemies, which he obtained by single combat. He trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath alone, and triumphed over principalities and powers in himself, Col. ii. 15. Of the people there was none with him; for when he came to work in the darkness, all his discipies forsook him, and fled. There was none to help, none that could, none that durst; and he might well wonder not only that among the children of men, whose concern it was, there was not only none to uphold, but that there were so many to oppose and hinder it if they could.

(2.) He undertakes the war purely out of his own
zeal; it is in his anger, it is in his fury, that he treads down his enemies, (v. 3.) and that fury uphold\omits him, and carries him on in this enterprise, v. 5.  God wrought salvation for the oppressed Jews, entirely because he was very angry with the oppressing Babylonians, angry at their idolatries and sorceries, their pride and cruelty, and the injuries they did to his people; in which, as they increased and grew more insolent and outrageous, his anger increased to fury. Our Lord Jesus wrought out our redemption, in a holy zeal for the honour of his Father, the happiness of mankind, and a holy indignation at the daring attempts Satan had made upon both; this zeal and indignation upheld him throughout all his undertaking.

Two branches there were of this zeal, that animated him;
[1.] He had a zeal against his and his people's enemies; The day of vengeance is in my heart, (v. 4.) the day fixed in the eternal counsels for taking vengeance upon them; this was written in his heart, so that he could not forget it, could not let it slip; his heart was full of it, and it lay as a charge, as a weight, upon him, which made him push on this holy war with so much vigour. Note, There is a day fixed for divine vengeance, which may be long deferred, but will come at last; and we may be content to wait for it, for the Redeemer himself does, though his heart is upon it.

[2.] He had a zeal for his people, and for all that he could do for them and theirs in the intended salvation; “The year of my redeemed is come, the year appointed for their redemption.” The year was fixed for the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and God kept time to a day; (Exod. xii. 41.) so there was for their release out of Babylon; (Dan. ix. 2.) so there was for Christ's coming to destroy the works of the devil; so there is for all the deliverances of the church; and the Deliverer has an eye to it. Observe, First, With what pleasure he speaks of his people; they are his redeemed; they are his own, dear to him. Though their redemption is not yet wrought out, yet he calls them his redeemed, because it shall as surely be done as if it were done already. Secondly, With what pleasure he speaks of his people's redemption; how glad he is that the time is come, though he is likely to meet with a sharp opposition. The year of my redemption is come, Lo, I come; delay shall be no longer. Now will I arise, saith the Lord. Now that shall we see what I will do to Pharaoh. Note, The promised salvation must be patiently waited for, till the time appointed comes; yet we must attend the promises with our prayers. Does Christ say, Surely I come quickly; let our hearts reply, Even so, come; let the year of the redeemed come.

He will obtain a complete victory over them all.
[1.] Much is already done; for he now appears red in his apparel; such abundance of blood is shed, that the Conqueror's garments are all stained with it. This was predicted, long before, by dying Jacob, concerning Shiloh, that is, Christ, that he should wash his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes, which perhaps alludes to, Gen. xlix. 11.

With ornaments and garments I stood, And with my visor with my enemy's blood. Mr. Norris.

In the destruction of the antichristian powers we meet with abundance of bloodshed, (Rev. xiv. 20. —six. 13.) which yet, according to the dialect of prophecy, may be understood spiritually, and doubtless so may this here.

[2.] More shall yet be done; (v. 6.) I will tread down the people, that yet stand out against me, in my anger; for the victorious Redeemer, when the year of the Redeemer is come, will go on conquering and to conquer, Rev. vi. 2. When he begins, he will also make an end. Observe, How he will complete his victories over the enemies of his church First, He will intestine them; he will make them drunk, so that there shall be neither sense nor steadiness in their counsels; they shall drink of the cup of his fury, and that shall intoxicate them; or, we will make them drunk with their own blood, Rev. xvii. 6. Let those that make themselves drunk with the cup of riot, (and then they are in their fury,) repent and reform, lest God make them drunk with the cup of his fury.

Secondly, He will enfeebles them; he will bring down their strength, and so bring them down to the earth; for what strength can hold out against Omni power?

7. I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses.

8. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie; so he was their Saviour. 9. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them: and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. 10. But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them. 11. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his holy Spirit within him? 12. That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? 13. That led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? 14. As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest; so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.

The prophet is here, in the name of the church, taking a review, and making a thankful recognition, of God's dealings with his church all along, ever since he founded it, before he comes, in the latter end of this chapter, and in the next, as a watchman upon the walls, earnestly to pray to God for his compassion toward her in her present desolate state; and it was usual for God's people, in their prayers, thus to look back.

Here is a general acknowledgment of God's goodness to them all along, v. 7. It was said, in general, of God's prophets and people, (ch. xxii. 6.) that they make mention of the Lord; now here we are told what it is that in God, that they do especially call to make mention of, and that is, his goodness, which the prophet here so makes mention of, as if he thought he could never say enough of it. He mentions the kindness of God, (which never appeared so evident, so eminent, as in his love to mankind in sending his Son to save us, Tit. iii. 4.) his loving-kindness, kindness that shows itself-
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Of the things that is enduring; nay, so plentiful are the springs, and so various the streams, of divine mercy, that he speaks of it in the plural number, his loving-kindnesses; for if we would count the fruits of his loving-kindness, they are more in number than the sand. With his loving-kindnesses he mentions his praises; the thankful acknowledgments which the saints make of his loving-kindness, and the angels too; it must be mentioned, to show what a wealth of grace he had bestowed upon his creatures in consideration of his loving-kindness. See how copiously he speaks, 1. Of the goodness that is from God, the gifts of his loving-kindness; all that the Lord has bestowed upon us in particular, relating to life and godliness, in our personal and family capacity; let every man speak for himself, speak as he has found, and he must know that he has had a great deal bestowed upon him by the divine bounty. But we must also mention the favours bestowed upon his church, his great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he has bestowed on them. Note, We must bless God for the mercies enjoyed by others, as well as for those enjoyed by ourselves, and reckon that bestowed on ourselves, which is bestowed on the house of Israel. 2. Of the goodness that is in God. God does good because he is good; what he bestows upon us, must be run up to the original, it is according to his mercies, not according to our merits, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses, which can never be spent. Thus we should magnify God's goodness, and speak honourably of it, not only when we plead it, (as David, Ps. cxl. 14.) but whenever we can. (1.) The expectations God had concerning them, that they would conduct themselves well, v. 8. When he brought them out of Egypt and took them into covenant with himself, he said, "Surely they are my people, I take them as such, and am willing to hope they will approve themselves so; children that will not lie;" that will not dissemble with God in their covenantings with him, nor treacherously depart from him by breaking their covenant, and starting aside like a broken bow. They said, more than once, All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do, and will be obedient; and thereupon he took them as his people, saying, Surely they will not lie. God deals fairly and faithfully with them, and therefore expects they should deal so with him. They are children of the covenant, (Acts iii. 25.) children of those that clave unto the Lord, and therefore it may be hoped that they will tread in the steps of their father's constancy. Note, God's people are children that will not lie; for those that will not lie are not his children, but the devil's. (2.) The favour he showed them, with an eye to these expectations; So was he their Saviour out of the bondage of Egypt, and all the calamities of their wilderness-state, and many a time since he had been their Saviour. See particularly, (v. 9.) what he did for them as their Saviour.

2. Their principle that moved him to work salvation for them; it was in his love, and in his pity, out of mere compassion to them, and a tender affection for them, not because he either needed them, or could be benefited by them. This is strangely expressed here, In all their affliction he was afflicted; not that the Eternal Mind is capable of grieving, or God's infinite blessedness of suffering the least damage or diminution; (God cannot be afflicted) but thus he is pleased to show forth the love and concern he has for his people in their affliction; thus far he sympathizes with them, that he takes what injury is done to them as done to himself, and will reckon for it accordingly. Their cries move him, (Exod. iii. 7.) and he appears for them as vigorously as if he were pains in their pain; Saviour, Saviour, why persecutest thou me? This is a matter of great comfort to God's people in their affliction, that God is so far from afflicting willingly, (Isa. iii. 53.) that, if they humble themselves under his hand, he is afflicted in their affliction, as the tender parents are in the severe operations which the case of a sick child calls for. These are the words in the original; In all their affliction there was no affliclion; though they were in great affliction, yet the property of it was so altered by the grace of God sanctifying it to them for their good, the rigour of it was so mitigated, and it was so allayed and balanced with mercies, they were so wonderfully supported and comforted under it, and it proved so short, and ended so well, that it was in effect no affliction. The troubles of the saints are not that to them that they are to others, they are not afflictions, but medicines; saints are enabled to call them light, and but for a moment, and, with an eye to heaven as all in all, to make nothing of them. (2.) The Person employed in their salvation; the angel of his face, or presence. Some understand it as the angel created; the highest angel in heaven, even the angel of his presence, that attends next the throne of his glory, is not thought too great, too good, to be sent on this errand. Thus the little ones' angels are said to be those that always behold the face of our Father, Mat. xvii. 8. But this is rather to be understood of Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, that Angel of whom God spake to Moses, (Exod. xiii. 20.) whose vocation Israel was to obey. He is called Jehovah, Exod. xiiii. biv. 21.—xiv. 21, 24. He is the Angel of the covenant, God's Messenger to the world, Mal. iii. 1. He is the Angel of God's face, for he is the express Image of his person; and the glory of God shines in the face of Christ. He that was to work out the eternal salvation, as an earnest of that, wrought out the temporal salvations that were typical of it. (3.) The progress and perseverance of this favour. He not only redeemed them out of their bondage, but bare them, and carried them, all the days of old; they were weak, but he supported them by his power, sustained them by his bounty; when they were burdened, and ready to sink, he bore them up. In the wars they made upon the nations, he stood by them, and bore them up. 1. But he bore them with, and suffered their manners, Acts xiii. 18. He carried them, as the nursing father does the child, though they would have tired any arms but his; he carried them as the eagle her young upon her wings, Deut. xxxiii. 11. And it was a long time that he was troubled with them, (if we may so speak,) It was all the days of old; his care of them was not at an end, even when they were grown up, and settled in Canaan. All this was in his love and pity, ex mero motu—of his mere good-will; he loved them because he would love them, as he says, Deut. vii. 7, 8. 3. Their disingenuous conduct toward him, and the trouble they thereby brought upon themselves; (v. 10.) But they rebelled. Things looked very hopeful and promising; one would have thought that they should have continued dutiful children to God, and then there was no doubt but he would have continued a gracious Father to them; but here is a sad change on both sides, and on them be the breach. (1.) They revolted from their allegiance to God, and took his arms against him; they rebelled, and opposed his Holy Spirit in the progress of salvation, beside the iniquity of the golden calf; and this had been their way and manner ever since. Though he was ready to say of them, They will not, though he had done so much for them, borne
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them and carried them, yet they thus ill requited him, like foolish people and unwise, Deut. xxxii. 6. This grieved him, Ps. xcv. 10. The ungrateful rebellions of God's children against him are a vexation to his Holy Spirit. (2.) Thereupon he justly and deservedly disappointed them; for they had not only engaged in so many, but made war upon them, as a prince justly and deservedly engaged upb. his enemy. Had he who had been so much their Friend, was turned to be their Enemy, and fought against them, by one judgment after another, both in the wilderness, and after their settlement in Canaan. See the malignity and mishievousness of sin; it makes God an Enemy, even to those for whom he had prepared their own good place, and makes him angry, who was still love and pity. See also the benefits of sinners; they wilfully leave him for a Friend, who is the most desirable Friend, and make him their Enemy, who is the most formidable Enemy. This refers especially to those calamities that were of late brought upon them by their captivity in Babylon, for their idolatries, and other sins. That which is both the original, and the great aggravation of their troubles, was, that God was turned to be their Enemy.

4. A particular reflection made, on this occasion, upon what God did for them, when he first formed them into a people; Then he remembered the days of old, v. 11. This may be understood either, (1.) Of the people. Israel then (spoken of as a single person) remembered the days of old, looked into this transaction, and resolved to remember the days of old, and all things that happened then, as Gideon did; (Judg. vi. 13.) "Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of? Where is he that brought them up out of Egypt? Is he not as able to bring us up out of Babylon? Is the Lord God of Elijah? Where is the Lord God of our fathers? This they consider as an inducement and an encouragement to them to repent, and return to him: their fathers were a provoking people, and yet found him a pardoning God; and why not they find him so, if they return to him? They also use it as a plea with God in prayer for the turning again of their captivity, like that ch. li. 9, 10. Note, When the present days are dark and cloudy, it is good to remember the days of old, to reconcile our expectations of the future, and others' experiences of the divine power and goodness, and make use of them: to look back upon the years of the right hand of the Most High, (Ps. lxxvii. 5, 10,) and remember that he is God, and changes not. Or, (2.) We may understand it of God; he put himself in mind of the days of old, of his covenant with Abraham; (Lev. xxvii. 42,) he said, Where is he that brought Israel up out of the sea? Stirring up himself to come and save them, with this consideration, "Why should not I appear for them now as I did for their fathers, who were as undeserving, as ill-deserving, as they are? See how far off divine mercy will go, how far back it will look, to find out a reason for doing good to his people, when no present considerations appear but what are against them. Now, it makes that a reason for removing them, which might have been used as a reason for abandoning them. He might have said, "I have delivered them formerly, but they have again brought trouble upon themselves, (Prov. xix. 19;) therefore I will deliver them no more." Judg. x. 13. But no; mercy rejoices against judgment, and turns the argument the other way; I have formerly delivered them, and therefore will now."

Which way soever we take it, whether the people plead it with God, or God with himself, let us view the particulars; they agree very much with the confession and prayer which the children of the captivity made upon a solemn fast-day, (N. h. ix. 3, 8,.) which may serve as a comment on these verses here, which call to mind Moses and his people; that is, what God did by Moses for his people, especially in bringing them through the Red sea; for that is it that is here most insisted on; for it was a work which he much glorified in, and which his people specially favored. Herein God encourages them to engage themselves with the remembrance of

1. [1.] God led them by the right hand of Moses, (v. 12,) and the wondering-working rod in his hand; (Ps. xcvii. 20.) Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses. It was not Moses that led them, any more than it was Moses that fed them, (John vi. 52;) but God led Moses; for it was he that glorified his rod and his name, (Ps. xxiv.) and膏oproved him in, that great undertaking. Moses is here called the shepherd of his flock; God was the Owner of the flock, and the chief Shepherd of Israel; (Ps. lxxx. 1.) but Moses was a shepherd under him; and he was inured to labour and patience, and so fitted for this pastoral care, by his being trained up to keep the flock of his father Jethro. 

2. [2.] He putt his holy Spirit within him; the Spirit of God was among them, and not only his providence, but his grace, did work for them; (Neh. ix. 20.) Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them. The Spirit of prophecy was put into Moses, to qualify him for that service among them, to which he was called; and some of his spirit was put upon the seventy elders, Numb. xi. 17. This was a great blessing to Israel, that they had among them not only inspired writings, but inspired men.

3. [3.] He carried them safely through the Red sea, and thereby saved them out of the hands of Egypt. First, He divided the water before them, (v. 12,) so that it gave them not only passage, but protection, not only opened them a lane, but erected them a wall on either side. Secondly, He led them through the deep as a horse in the wilderness, or in the plain; (v. 13,) they and their wives and children, with all their baggage, went as easily and readily through the bottom of the sea, though we may suppose it muddy or stony, or both, as a horse goes along upon even ground; so that they did not stumble, though it was an unstrodden path, which neither they nor any one else ever went before. If God make us a way, he will make it plain and level; the road he opens to his people he will lead them in. Thirdly, To complete the mercy, he brought them up out of the sea, v. 11. Though the ascent, it is likely, was very steep, dirty slippery, and unconquerable, (at least by the women and children, and the men; considering how they were loaded, (Exod. xii. 34,) and how fatigued,) yet God by his power brought them up from the depths of the earth; and it was a kind of resurrection to them; it was as life from the dead.

4. [4.] He brought them safe to a place of rest; As a beast goeth down into the earth, so they went into Egypt, (v. 14,) and turned the wilderness into their resting-places, and Egypt into their resting-places for them, by the direction of the Spirit of the Lord and Moses, v. 11. And at length they were made to rest finally in Canaan, and the Spirit of the Lord gave them that rest according to the promise. It is by the Spirit of the Lord that God's Israel is enabled to return to God, and impute in him as their Rest.

5. [5.] All this he did for them by his own power, for his own praise. First, It was by his own power, as the God of nature, that has all the powers of nature at his command: he did it with his glorious arm; the arm of his gallantry, or bravery; so the
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\[\text{wird signifies. It was not Moses's, but God's, glory, that did it. Secondly, It was for his own praise; to make himself an everlasting name. (v. 12.) a glorious name, (v. 14.) that he might be glorious, everlasting, glorified, upon this account. This is that which God is doing in the world with his glorious arm, he is making to himself a glorious name, and it shall last to endless ages, when the most celebrated names of the great ones of the earth shall be written in the dust.}

13. Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained? 16. Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting. 17. O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance. 18. The people of thy holiness have possessed it, but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. 19. We are thine: thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name.

The foregoing praises were intended as an introduction to this prayer, which is continued to the end of the next chapter, and it is an affectionate, importunate, pleading prayer. It is calculated for the time of the captivity. As they had promises, so they had prayers, prepared for them against that time of need; that they might take with them words in turning to the Lord, and say unto him what he himself taught them to say, in which they might the better hope to prevail, the words being of God's own enditing. Some good interpreters think this prayer looks further, and that it speaks the complaints of the Jews under their last and final rejection from God, and destruction by the Romans; for then it was fulfilled, that it is, and the like Lutheran doctrine in the grace of the gospel by the apostle, (1 Cor. ii. 9.) that grace for the rejecting of which they were rejected. In these verses, we may observe,

I. The petitions they put up to God. 1. That he would take cognizance of their case, and of the desires of their souls toward him; Look down from heaven, and behold. They know very well that God sees all, but they pray that he would regard them, would condescend to favour them, would look upon them with an eye of compassion and concern, as he looked upon the affliction of his people in Egypt, when he was about to appear for their deliverance. In begging that he would only look down upon them and behold them, they do in effect appeal to his pity, his compassion, and his knowledge, and pray judgment against them, as Jehoshaphat; (2 Chron. xx. 11, 12.) Behold, how they reward us. Will thou not judge them? And they refer themselves to his mercy and clemency, as to the way in which he will relieve them; (Ps. xxxv. 18.) Look upon mine affliction and my pain, Look down from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy power, and of thy holiness is his glory. Heaven is his habitation, the throne of his glory, where he most manifests his glory, and whence he is said to look down upon this earth, Ps. xxxiii. 14. His holiness is in a special manner celebrated there by the blessed angels; (ch. vi. 3. Rev. iv. 8.) there his holy ones attend him, and are continually about him; so that it is the habitation of his holiness, which is an encomiastic name to all approvingly, (Who desire to be held as he is holy,) that he dwells in an holy place. 2. That he would take a course for their relief; (v. 17.) *Return;* change thy way towards us, and proceed not in thy controversy with us; return in mercy, and let us have not only a gracious look toward us, but thy gracious presence with us." God's people dread nothing more than his departures from his presence, and desire nothing more than his returns to them.

II. The complaints they made to God. Two things they complain of: 1. That they were given up to themselves, and God's grace did not recover them, v. 17. It is a strange expostulation, "Why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, many among us, the generality of us; and this complaint we have all of us some cause to make, that thou hast hardened our heart from thy fear." Some make it to be the language of those among them, that were impious and profane; when the prophets reproved them for the error of their ways, their hardness of heart, and contempt of God's word and commandments, they with a daring impudence and insolent contumacy, as Menas in the case of the Author of it; and why doth he then find fault? Some are wiser, who are wicked indeed, that lay the blame of their wickedness upon God. But I rather take it to be the language of those among them, that lamented the unbelief and impertinence of their people, not accusing God of being the Author of them, but complaining of them to him. They own that they had erred from God's will, and may have been hardened from his fear, that they had not received the impressions which the fear of God ought to make upon them; and this was the cause of all their errors from their ways; or, from his fear; from the true worship of God; and that is a hard heart in deed, which is alienated from the service of a God so incontestably great and good. Now this they complained of as their great misery and burthen, that God had for their sins left them to this; had permitted them to err from his ways, and had justly witheld his grace, so that their hearts were hardened from his fear. When they ask, Why hast thou done this? it is not as charging him with wrong, but lamenting it as a sore judgment. God's enemies were not only hardened from his fear, not only by withdrawing his Spirit from them, because they had grieved, and vexed, and quenched him, (v. 10.) but by a judicial sentence upon them, (Go, make the heart of this people fat, ch. vi. 9, 10.) and by his providences concerning them, which had proved sad occasions of their departure from him. David complains of his banishment, that in he was in effect bidden to go serve other gods, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. Their troubles had alienated many of them from God, and prejudiced them against his service; and because the rod of the wicked had lain long on their lot, they were ready to put forth their hand unto iniquity, (Ps. cxviii. 3.) and this was the thing they complained most of; their affections were there their temptations, and to many of them invisible ones. So, Convinced of these complaints of most of spiritual judgments, and dared that most in affliction, which draws them from God and duty.

2. That they were given up to their enemies, and God's providence did not rescue and relieve them; (v. 18.) Our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. As it was a grief to them, that in their captivity the generality of them had lost their relations to God's worship, and had their hearts hardened from it by their affliction; so it was a further grief, that they were deprived of their opportunities of worshipping God in solemn assemblies. They complained not so much of their adversaries.
treading down their houses and cities, as of their
treading down God's sanctuary; because thereby
God was immediately affronted, and they were
robbed of the comforts they valued most, and took
most pleasure in.

III. The pleas they urge with God for mercy and
deliverance:
1. They plead the tender compassion God used to
show on his people, and his ability and readiness
to appear for them, v. 15. The most prevailing
arguments in prayer are those that are taken from
God himself; such these are: Where is thy zeal
and thy strength? God has a zeal for his own
glory, and for the comfort of his people; his name
is Jealous, and he is a jealous God; and he has
strength, proportionable, to secure his own glory,
and the interests of his people, in defense of all op-
position. Now where are these? Have they not
formerly appeared? Why do they not appear now?
It cannot be, that divine zeal, which is infinitely
wise and just, should be cooled; that divine strength,
which is infinite, should be weakened. Nay, his
people had experienced not only his zeal and his
strength, but the sounding of his bowels, the yearn-
ing of his heart, to such a degree of compassion to
them as in men causes compassion and tears within them,
as Hos. xi. 8. My heart is turned within me, my
repentings are kindled together; and Jer. xxxi. 20.
My bowels are troubled, or sound, for him. Thus
God is affected toward his people, thus he expresses
a multitude of mercies toward them; but where are
they now? Are they restrained? Ps. lxxvii. 9. Has
God who so often remembered to be gracious, now
forgotten it? Has he a heart of mercy left towards
mercy? It can never be. Note, We may ground
good expectations of further mercy upon our ex-
periences of former mercy.

2. They plead God's relation to them as their
Father; (v. 16.) "Thy tender mercies are not re-
strained, for they are the tender mercies of a father,
who, though he may be for a time displeased with
his child, will yet, through the force of natural
affection, soon be reconciled. Doubtless thou art
our Father, and therefore thy bowels will yearn
ward us.") Such good thoughts of God as these
we should always keep up in our hearts. However it
be, yet God is good; for he is our Father. (1.)
They own themselves fatherless, if he be not their
Father, and so cast themselves upon him with whom
the Father of their fathers is. It was the honour of
their nation, that they had Abraham to their father,
(Matth. iii. 9.) who was the friend of God, and Israel,
who was a prince with God; but what the better were they for that, unless they had
God himself for their Father? "Abraham and Is-
crael cannot help us; they have not the power
that God has, they are dead long since, and are ignorant
of us, and acknowledge us not; they know not
what our case is, nor what our wants are, and there-
fore know not which way to do us a kindness. If
Abraham and Israel were alive with us, they would
intercede for us, and advise us; but they are gone
to the other world, and we know not that they have any
communication at all with this world, and therefore
they are not capable of doing us any kindness, any
further than the tender mercies of God himself called
their children." When the father is dead, his sons
come to honour, and he knows it not; (Job xiv. 21.)
but thou, O Lord, art our Father still. The fathers
of our flesh may call themselves ever-loving, but
they are not ever-living; it is God only that is the
immortal Father, that always knows us, and is near
unto us. Our Redeemer from everlasting is thy name, the name of him that we
know and own thee; it is the name by which from
of old thou hast been known; thy people have
always looked upon thee as the God to whom they
might appeal to right them, and plead their cause.
Nay, (according to the sense some give of this
place,) "though Abraham and Israel not only
know not, but would not help us, thou wilt; they have not
the pity thou hast. We are so degenerate, and
corrupt, that Abraham and Israel would not own us
for their children, yet we fly to thee as our Father.
Abraham cast out his son Ishmael; Jacob disin-
herited his son Reuben, and cursed Simeon and Levi;
but God has not only been in pardoning sin, is
God, and not man," Hos. xi. 9.

3. They plead God's interest in them, that he
was their Lord, their Owner and Proprietor; "We
are thy servants; what service we can do, thou art
entitled to, and therefore we ought not to serve
strange kings and strange gods; return for thy ser-
vation sake." As a father finds himself obliged by
natural affection to relieve and protect his child, so
a master thinks himself obliged in honor to
serve and protect his servant; "We are thine by
the strongest engagements, as well as the highest
endearments. Thou hast borne rule over us, therefore,
Lord, assert thine own interest, maintain thine own
right: for we are called by thy name, and therefore,
whither shall we go but to thee, to be righted and
protected? We are thine, (Ps. cxix. 44.) thine
own, we are the tribes of thine inheritance, not only thy servants, but thy tenants; we
are thine, not only to do work for thee, but to pay
v. rent to thee. The tribes of Israel are God's inheri-
tance, whence issue the little praise and worship that
he receives from this lower world; and wilt thou suf-
fere thine own servants and tenants to be thus abused?"

4. They plead God's interest in them, had but a short en-
joyment of the land of promise and the privileges
of the sanctuary; (v. 18.) The people of thy hol-
iness have possessed it but a little while. From Abra-
ham to David were but fourteen generations, and from
David to the captivity but fourteen more; (Matth.
ix. 17.) and that was but a little while in comparison
with what might have been expected from the pro-
mise of the land of Canaan, for an everlasting pos-
session, (Gen. xvii. 8.) and from the power that
was put forth to bring them into that land, and settle them in it; "Though we are the people of thy
holiness, distinguished from other people, and con-
secrated to thee, yet we are soon dislodged." But
this they might thank themselves for; they were,
in profession, the people of God's holiness, but it
was a people that turned them out of the posses-
sion of that land.

5. They plead that those who had, and kept, posses-
sion of their land, were such as were strangers
to God, such as he had no service or honour from;
"Though never barest rule over them, nor did they
ever yield thee any obedience; they were not called
by thy name, but professed relation to other gods,
and were the worshippers of them. Will God suf-
fere those that stand in no relation to him to trample
upon those that do? Some give another reading of
this; "We are become as those whom thou didst
never bear rule over, nor were called by thy name;
we are rejected and abandoned, despised and tramp-
plied upon, as if we never had been in thy service,
nor had thy name called upon us." Thus the shield
of Saul was taken away from him. Thrice had God
been anointed with oil. But the covenant, that
seems to be forgotten, shall be remembered again.

CHAP. LXIV.

This chapter goes on with that pathetic pleading prayer,
which the church offered up to God in the latter part of
the foregoing chapter. Its chief particular is, the coven-

nent relation to God and his interest and concern in
them: now here, 1. They pray that God would appear
in some remarkable and surprising manner for them
against his and their enemies, v. 1, 2. How they seen
what God had formerly done, and was always ready to
do, for his people, v. 3. 4. 5. They confess themselves to be sinful, and unworthy of God's favour, and that they had deserved the judgments they were now under, v. 6. 7. 14. They refer themselves to the mercy of God as a Father, and commit themselves to his sovereign mercy, v. 8. V. They represent the very deplorable condition they were in, and earnestly pray for the pardon of sin, and the turning away of God's anger, v. 9. 10. And this was not only intended for the use of the captive Jews, but may serve for direction to the church in other times of distress, what to ask of God, and how to plead with him. Are God's people at any time in affliction, in great affliction? Let them pray, let them thus pray.

1. O that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence; 2. As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil; to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence! 3. When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence. 4. For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. 5. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness; those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.

Here,

1. The petition is, that God would appear wonderfully for them now, v. 1, 2. Their case was represented, in the close of the foregoing chapter, as very sad, and very hard, and in this case it was time to cry, "Help, Lord; O that God would manifest his zeal and his strength!" They had prayed, (ch. iii. 13.) that God would "flow down from heaven; here they pray that he would come down to deliver them, as he had said, Exod. iii. 8. 1. They desire that God would in his providence manifest himself both to them and for them. When God works some extraordinary deliverance for his people, he is said to "shine forth," to show himself strong; so, here, they pray that he would "rend the heavens, and come down" as when he delivered David, he is said to "flow the heavens, and come down" (Ps. xviii. 9.) to display his power, and justice, and goodness, in an extraordinary manner, so that all may take notice of them, and acknowledge them. God's people desire and pray, that, they then themselves having the satisfaction of seeing him, though his way be in the sea, others may be made to see him with a backward eye, and a forward eye, and a delighted eye, to the second coming of Christ, when the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

2. They desire that he would vanquish all opposition, and that it might be made to give way before him; that the mountains might "flow down at thy presence," that the fire of thy wrath may burn so hot against thine enemies, as even to dissolve the rockiest mountains, and melt them down before it, as metal in the furnace, which is made liquid, and cast into what shape the operator pleases; so the melting fire burns, v. 2. Let things be put into a ferment, in order to a glorious revolution in favour of the church, as the fire causes the waters to boil. There is an allusion here, some think, to the voltaic

noes, or burning mountains, which sometimes send forth such sulphureous streams as make the adjacent rivers and seas to boil, which, perhaps, are left as sensible intimations of the power of God's wrath, and warning-pieces of the final conflagration. 3. They desire that this may tend very much to the glory and honour of God; and make him "known, not only to his friends, (they knew it before,) and trusted in his power,) but to his adversaries likewise, that they may know it, and tremble at his presence, and may say, with the men of Bethshean, "Who is able to stand before this Holy Lord God? Who knows the power of his anger? Note, Sooner or later, God will make his name known to his adversaries, and show these to be mean by his name, that he could not confine worship in his presence. God's name, if it be not a strong hold for us, into which we may run and be safe, will be a strong hold against us, out of the reach of which we cannot run and be safe. The day is come, when nations shall be made to tremble at the presence of God, though they were ever so numerous and strong.

II. The plea is, that God had appeared wonderfully for his people formerly; and Thou hast, therefore Thou wilt, is good arguing at the throne of grace, Ps. x. 17. 1. They plead what he had done for his people Israel in particular, when he brought them out of Egypt, v. 3. He then did terrible things in the presence of Egypt, which they looked not for; they despaired of deliverance, so far were they from any thought of being delivered with such a high hand and outstretched arm. Then he came down upon mount Sinai in such terror, as made that and the adjacent mountains to flow down at his presence, to skift like rams, (Ps. cxxiv. 4.) to tremble, so that they were scattered, and the perpetual hills were made to tremble, Ps. vi. 5. In the many great operations God wrought for that people, he did terrible things which they looked not for, made great men, that seemed as stately and strong as mountains, to fall before him, and great opposition to give way. See Judg. v. 4. 5. Ps. lxviii. 7. 8. Some refer this to the defeat of Sennacherib's powerful army, which was as surprising an instance of the divine power as the melting fire burns, and the volc.
understand, but God himself, what the provision is, that is made for the present and future felicity of holy souls. For, [1.] Much of it was concealed in former ages; they knew it not, because the unsearchable riches of Christ were hid in God; were hid from the wise and prudent; but in the latter ages were revealed by the gospel; so the apostle applies this, (1 Cor. ii. 9.) for it follows, (v. 10.) But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit; comp. Rom. xvi. 25, 26, with Eph. iii. 9. That which men had not heard since the beginning of the world, they should hear before the end of it, and at the end of it should see, when the vail shall be rent forever, the glory that is yet to be revealed. God himself knew what he had in store for believers, but none knew beside him. [2.] It cannot be fully comprehended by human understanding, no, not when it is revealed; it is spiritual, and refined from those ideas which our minds are most apt to receive in this world of sense; it is very great, and will far outdo the utmost of our expectations. Even the present peace of believers, much more their future bliss, is such as passes all conception and expression, Phil. iv. 7. None can comprehend it but God himself, whose understanding is infinite. Some give another reading of these words, referring their transcendency not so much to the work itself as to the Author of it; Neither has the eye seen a god beside Thee which doeth so, (or has done, or can do it) (v. 4.) and dost not forget those that remember thee in thy ways.” See here what communion there is between a gracious God and a gracious soul: [1.] What God expects from us, in order to our having communion with him. First, We must make conscience of doing our duty in every thing, we must work righteousness, must do that which is good, and which the Lord our God requires of us, and must do it well. Secondly, We must be cheerful in doing our duty; we must rejoice and work righteousness, must delight ourselves in God and in his law, must be pleasant in his service, and sing at our work. God loves a cheerful giver, a cheerful worshipper; we must serve the Lord with gladness. Thirdly, We must conform ourselves to all the methods of his providence concerning us, and be suitably affected with them: must remember him in his ways, in all the ways wherein he walks, whether he walks towards us, or walks contrary to us; we must mind him, and make mention of him, with thanksgiving, when his ways are ways of mercy, for in a day of prosperity we must be joyful, with patience and submission when he contends with us; in a day of judgment we have reason to fear; and in a day of adversity we must consider. [2.] We are here told what we must expect from God, if we thus attend him in the way of duty; Thou meetest him. This speaks the friendship, fellowship, and familiarity, to which God admits them; he meets them to converse with them, to manifest himself to them, and to receive their addresses, Ex. b. 24. These sins, which are so often mentioned, and doth not therefore forget them; he will rejoice with them with the blessings of his goodness, will rejoice to do good to them that rejoice in working righteousness, and wait to be gracious to those that wait for him. He meets his penitent people with a pardon, as the father of the prodigal met his returning son, Luke xvi. 20. He meets his praying people with an answer of peace, while they are yet speaking, ch. lix. 24.

3. They plead the unchangeableness of God's favour, and the stability of his promise, notwithstanding the sins of his people, and his displeasure against them for their sins; Behold, thou hast many a time been wroth with us, because we have sinned, and we have been under the tokens of thy wrath; but in those, those ways of thine, the ways of mercy in which we have remembered thee, in those is continuance; or, “in those thou art ever,” (his mercy endures for ever.) “and therefore we shall at last be saved, though thou art wrath, and we have sinned.” This agrees with the tenor of God's covenant, that if we forsake the law, he will chasten our transgression with a rod, but his loving-kindness will not utterly take away, his covenant he will not break, (Ps. lxxxix. 30, &c.) and by this his people have been many a time saved from ruin, when they were just upon the brink of it; see Ps. lxxvii. 38. And by this continuance of the covenant we hope to be saved, for its being an everlasting covenant is all our salvation. Though God has been angry with us for our sins, and justly, yet his anger has endured but for a moment, and has been soon over; but in his favour is life, because in it is continuance; in the ways of his favour he proceeds and perseveres, and on that we depend for our salvation; see ch. lv. 7, 8. It is well for us, that our hopes of salvation are built not upon any merit or sufficiency of our own, (for in that there is no certainty, even Adam in innocency did not abide,) but upon God's mercies and promises, for in those we are sure, is continuance.

6. But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. 7. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stretcheth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. [8. But now, O Lord, thou art our Father: we are the clay, and thou our Potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.] 9. Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. 10. Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. 11. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burnt up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste. 12. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Lord? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?

As we have the Lamentations of Jeremiah, so here we have the Lamentations of Isaiah; the subject of both is the same—the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and the sin of Israel that brought that destruction; only with this difference, Jeremiah sees it at a distance, and laments it by the Spirit of prophecy; Jeremiah saw it accomplished.

I. The people of God in their affliction confess and bewail their sins, thereby justifying God in their afflictions, owning themselves unworthy of his mercy, and thereby both improving their troubles, and preparing for deliverance. Now that they were under divine rebukes for sin, they had nothing to trust to but the mere mercy of God and the continuance
of that, for amon...hemselves there is none to help, none to uphold, none to stand in the gap and make intercession, for they are all polluted with sin, and their little good deeds are reckoned with them for their miss in duty, and therefore unable and unfit to do it. 1. There was a general corruption of manners among them; (v. 6) 

"We are all as an unclean thing, or, as an unclean person, as one overspread with a leprosy, who was to be shut out of the camp. The body of the people were like one under a ceremonial pollution, who was not admitted into the courts of God's tabernacle; or, like one labouring under some loathsome disease, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, nothing but wounds and bruises, ch. i. 6. We are all by sin become not only obnoxious to God's justice, but odious to his holiness; for sin is that abominable thing which the Lord hates, and cannot endure to look upon. Even all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; (v. 3) the best of our persons are so; we are all so corrupt and polluted, that even those among us who pass for righteous men, in comparison with what our fathers were, who rejoiced and wrought righteousness, (v. 5.) are but as filthy rags, fit to be cast to the dung-hill; The best of them is as a brier."

(2.) The best of our performances are so; there is not only a general corruption among us, but an idleness of mind, those which pass for the sacrifices of righteousness, when they come to be inquired into, are the torn, and the lame, and the sick, and therefore are provoking to God, as nauseous as filthy rags. Our performances, though they be ever so plausible, if we depend upon them as our righteousness, and think to merit by them at God's hands, they are but filthy rags; rags, and will not cover us; filthy rags, and will but defile us. True penitents cast away their idols as filthy rags, (ch. xxx. 22.) diuion in their sight; here they acknowledge even their righteousness to be so in God's sight, if he should deal with them in strict justice. Our best duties are so defective, and so far short of the rule, that they are as rags, and so full of sin and corruption cleaving to them, that they are as filthy rags. When we would do good, evil is present with us; and the iniquity of our holy things would be our ruin, if we were under the law.

2. There was a general coldness of devotion among them, v. 7. The measure was filled by the abounding iniquity of the people, and nothing would have squared the measure of the sanctuary; hence are they altogether become filthy, for they cast not upon the Lord, (v. 4.) They are altogether become filthy, for they cast not upon the Lord; and the prayer of them, who pretend to pray, is strained among them. (2.) It was very negligently performed; if there was here and there one that called on God's name, it was with a great deal of indifference; There is none that stirri us him to take hold of God, Note, [1.] To pray is to take hold of God, by faith to take hold of the promises, and the declarations God has made of his good-will to us, and to plead for a people, not to pray to God as of one who is about to depart from us, earnestly begging of him not to leave us; or of one that is departed, soliciting his return; to take hold of him, as he that wrestles takes hold of him he wrestles with; for the seed of Jacob wrestle with, and so prevail. But when we take hold of God, it is as the person with his boot-of-plaster was on the shore as if he would pull the shore to him, but really it is to pull himself to the shore; so we pray, not to bring God to our mind, but to bring ourselves to his. [2.] Those that would take hold of God in prayer so as to prevail with him, must stir up themselves to do it; all that is within us must be employed in the duty, (and all little enough) our thoughts, our meditations, our desires, our affections, our affections and our prayers, must be employed concerning this business; we must stir up the gift that is in us, by an actual consideration of the importance of the work that is before us, and a close application of mind to it; but how can we expect that God should come to us in ways of mercy, when we were not and are not disposed that, when those that profess to be intercessors are so much more given to their own lusts, and are so much given up to the diabolical, as this whole passage is, to the lasciviousness, to the adulteries, to the concupiscence of lust and to the lasciviousness of men."
ISAIAH, LXV.

We are thy people, and in thy name wilt thou be called: they that know thee shall not be ashamed. (v. 8.)

We are thine; save us. Ps. cxxxv. 94. Note, When we are under providential rebukes from God, it is good to keep fast hold of our covenant relation to him.

IV. They are iniquity with God for the turning away of his anger, and the purging of their sins. (v. 9.) Be not wroth, O Lord, though we have deserved that thou shouldest, neither remember iniquity for ever against us. They do not expressly pray for the removal of the judgment they were under, as to that, they refer themselves to God. But, 1. They pray that God would be reconciled to them, and then they can be easily attended with the things he had or might do: Be not wroth to extremity, but let thine anger be mitigated by the clemency and compassion of a father. They do not say, Lord rebuke us not, for that may be necessary, but, Not in thy anger, not in thy hot displeasure. It is but in a little wrath that God hides his face. 2. They pray that they may not be dealt with according to the desert of their sin, as God is wroth with them. Some make the evil of sin, that it deserves to be remembered for ever; and this is that which they deprecate, that consequence of sin, which is for ever. These make it to appear that they are truly humbled under the hand of God, who are more afraid of the terror of God's wrath and the fatal consequences of their own sin, than of any judgment whatsoever, looking upon these as the sting of death, and that to part the corpse of heaven a very melancholy representation, or memorial of the melancholy condition they were in, and the ruins they were groaning under.

1. Their own houses were in ruins, v. 10. The cities of Judah were destroyed by the Chaldæans, and the inhabitants of them were carried away, so that there was none to repair them or take any notice of them, which would in a few years make them look like perfect deserts; Thy holy cities are a wilderness. The cities of Judah are called holy cities, for the people were unto God a kingdom of priests. The cities had synagogues in them, in which God was served; and therefore they lamented the ruins of them, and insisted upon this in pleading with God for them, not so much that they were stately cities, richly adorned with altars and altars, but that they were holy cities, in which God's name was known, professed, and called upon; these cities are a wilderness, the beauty of them is sullied, they are neither inhabited nor visited, as formerly; They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land, Ps. cxxvi. 8. Nor was it only the lesser cities that were thus left as a wilderness unfrequnented, but even Zion is a wilderness, the city of David itself lies in ruins, Jerusalem, that was beautiful for situation and the joy of the whole earth, is now deformed, and is become the scorn and scandal of the whole earth; that noble city is a desolation, a heap of rubbish. See what devastations sin brings upon a people; and an external profession of sanctity will be no fence against them; holy cities, if they become wicked cities, will be soonest of all turned into a ruin. They have become a wilderness.

2. God's house was in ruins, v. 11. This they lament most of all, that the temple was burned with fire; but, as soon as it was built, they were told what their sin would bring it to; (2 Chron. vii. 21.) This house which is high shall be an astonishment. Observe how pathetically they bewail the ruins of the temple; (1.) It was their holiness that made it a beautiful building, but the holiness of it was, in their eye, the greatest beauty of it, and, consequently, the profanation of it was he saddest part of its desolation, and that which grieved them most, that the sacred services which used to be performed there, were discontinued. (2.) It was the place where their fathers praised God with their sacrifices and songs; what pity is it that that should lie in ashes, which had been for so many ages the glory of their nation! It aggravated the sin of their present abjuration of God, that their fathers had so often praised God with them. They interest God in the cause, when they pleaded that it was the house where he had been praised, and put him in mind too of his covenant with their fathers, by taking notice of their fathers praising him. (3.) With it all their pleasant things were laid waste; all their desires and delights, all those things which were employed by them in the service of God, were carried away, or, as the masters of the old move, were caught away from under the eyes of them: and you lay waste all their pleasant things, which were to them matters of delight; not only the furniture of the temple, the altars and table, but especially the sabbaths and new moons, and all their religious feasts, which they used to keep with gladness; their ministers and solemn assemblies, these were all a desolation. Note, God's people reckon their sacred things their most delectable things; rob them of holy ordinances and the means of grace, and you lay waste all their pleasant things. What have they more? Observe here how God and his people have their interests twisted and interchanged; when they speak of the cities for their own habituation, they call them thy holy cities, for to God they were dedicated; when they speak of the temple wherein God dwelt, they call it our beautiful house, and its furniture our pleasant things, for they had heard of the pleasure and delight of others, and all the interests of it. If we thus interest God in all our concerns by devoting them to his service, and interest ourselves in all his concerns by laying them near our hearts, we may with satisfaction leave both with him, for he will perfect both.

VI. They conclude with an affectionate expostulation, humbly arguing with God concerning their present desolations; (v. 12.) How long shall this be? Or, Canst thou contain thyself at these things? Canst thou see thy temple ruined, and not resent it, not revenge it? Has the jealous God forgotten to be jealous, (Ps. lxxiv. 22.) Arise, O God, plead thine own cause. Lord, thou art insulted, thou art blasphemed; and wilt thou hold thy peace, and take no notice of it? Shall the highest affronts that can be done to heaven, pass these over, and not be punished? Is the good God, or the God of our fathers, not a God of vengeance? If so, does he not love the soul of his people? Does he not love to be called a God of vengeance? God's people were thus charged with the sin of their fathers; for we did not place their sins in the heart of God, and therefore, we would not be wreaked upon them; and, have we a right to speak for the conviction of thine enemies, speak for the comfort and relief of thy people; for wilt thou afflict us very sore, or afflict us for ever? It is a sore affliction to good people, to see God's sanctuary laid waste, and nothing done toward the raising of it out of its ruins. But God has said that he will not contend for ever, and therefore his people may depend upon it, that their afflictions shall be neither to extermination, nor to eternity, but light, and for a moment.

CHAP. LXV.

We are now drawing toward the conclusion of this evangelical prophecy, the two last chapters of which direct us to look forward to the new earth, the new world which the gospel-dispensation should bring in, and the separation that should by it be made between the precious and the vile; For judgment (says Christ) on me came into this world. And why should it seem absurd that the prophet here should speak of that to which all the prophets bare witness? 1 Pet. L
10, 11. The rejection of the Jews, and the calling in of the Gentiles, are often mentioned in the New Testament, as that which was foreseen and foretold by the prophets, Acts x. 43.—xii. 40. Rom. xvi. 26. In this chapter, we have, 1. The preventing of the Gentiles with the gospel, v. 1. 2. The rejection of the Jews for their unbelief and unbelief, v. 2.—7. 3. The saving of a remnant of them, by bringing them into the gospel church, v. 8.—16. 4. The judgments of God, that should pursue the rejected Jews, v. 11, 12. 5. The blessings reserved for the Christian church, which should be its joy and glory, v. 17. 25. But these things are here prophesied of under the type and figure of the difference God and Israel. 3. 11. The rejection of the Jews for their unbelief, and the blessings reserved for the church, after their return out of captivity, between those that feared God and those that did not; with reproofs of the sins then found among them, and promises of the blessings then in reserve for them.

1. I AM sought of them that asked not for me; I found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name, 2. Have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts. 3. A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; 4. Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments; which eat swine's flesh, and brood of abominable things is in their vessels; 5. Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day. 6. Behold, it is written before me; I will not keep silence, but will recompence, even recompense into their bosom. 7. Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the Lord, which have burnt incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom.

The apostle Paul (an expositor we may depend upon) has given us the true sense of these verses, and told us what was the event they pointed at, and were fulfilled in, namely, the calling in of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews, by the preaching of the gospel, Rom. x. 20, 21. And he observes, that herein Esaias is very bold, not only in foretelling a thing so improbable ever to be brought about, but in foretelling it to the Jews, who would take it as a gross affront to their nation, and therein Moses's words would be made good, (Deut. xxii. 21.) I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are not. 1. 1. It is here foretold that the Gentiles, who had been afar off, should be made nigh, v. 1. Paul reads it thus, I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest to them that asked not for me. Observe what a wonderful and blessed change was made with them, and how they were surprised into it. 1. Those who had long been without God in the world, shall now be set a-seeking him; those who had not said, Where is God my Maker? shall now begin to inquire after him: neither they nor their fathers had called upon his name, but either lived without prayer, or prayed to stocks and stones, the work of men's hands. But now they shall be baptized, and call on the name of the Lord, Acts ii. 11. With what pleasure does the great God here speak of his being sought unto, and how does he glory in it; especially by those who in time past had not asked for him! For there is joy in heaven over greater sinners who repent. 2. God shall prevent their prayers with his blessings; I am found of them that sought me not. This happy acquaintance and correspondence between God and the Gentile world began on his side; they came to know God because they were called, and called, and found him. But they should first be sought and found of him. Though in after-communion God is found of those that seek him, (Prov. vii. 17.) yet in the first conversion he is found of those that seek him not; for therefore we love him, because he first loved us. The design of the bounty of common providence is, that men should seek the Lord, if haply they should feel and know him, Acts xii. 27. But they sought him not, still he was to them an unknown God, and yet God was found of them. 3. God gave the advantages of a divine revelation to them who had never made a profession of religion; I said, Behold me, behold me, gave them a sight of me, and invited them to take the comfort and benefit of it, which were not called by my name, as the Jews for many ages had been. When the apostle went about from place to place, preaching the gospel, this was the substance of what they preached; Behold God, behold him, turn toward him, fix the eyes of your minds upon him, acquaint yourselves with him, and view him, adore him; look off your idols that you have made, and look up. x. 2. Then God applies this to the Jews in his time, as a seed of evil-doers; (Rom. xvi.) But to Israel he saith, All day long have I stretched forth my hand unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. Where observe, 1. How the Jews were courted to the divine grace. God himself, by his prophets, by his Son, by his apostles, stretched forth his hand unto them, as Wisdom did, Prov. iv. 23. God spread out his hands, to embrace and include them in the gospel, and to sonise and expostulating with them; not only beckoned to them with the finger, but spread out his hands, as being ready to embrace and entertain them; reaching forth the tokens of his favour to them, and importing them to accept of them. When Christ was crucified, his hands were spread out and stretched forth, as if he were preparing to receive returning sinners into his bosom, and this all the day, all the gospel-day; he waited to be gracious, and was not weary of waiting; even those that came in at the eleventh hour of the day were not rejected. 2. How they condemned the invitation; it was given to a rebellious and gainsaying people; they were bidden to the wedding supper, and would not come, but rejected the counsel of God against themselves. Now we have, I. (1.) The bad character of this people; the world shall see that it is not for nothing that they are rejected of God; no, it is for their whoredoms that they are put away. Their character in general is such as one would not expect them to deserve, who had been so much the favourites of Heaven. [1.] They were very willful people, for they would do as they had a mind. "They generally walk on in a way that is not good, not the right way, not a safe way, for they walk after their own thoughts, their own devices and desires." If our guide be our own thoughts, our way is not likely to be good; for
for all forbidden pleasures and profits which are obtained by sin, that abominable thing which the Lord hates; they loved to be dallying with it, to be tasting of its broth. But those who thus take a pride in venturing upon the borders of sin, and the brink of it, are in danger of falling into the depths of it. But

Secondly, The most provoking iniquity of the Jews in our Saviour's time was, their pride and hypocrisy, that sin of the scribes and Pharisees, against which Christ denounced so many woes, v. 5. They say, "Stand by thyself, keep off!" (get thee to thine, so the original is) keep to thy own companions, but come not near me, lest thou pollute me; touch me not, I will not have thee to do business with me, I am holier than thou, and therefore thou art not good enough to converse with me; I am not as other men are, nor even as this publican." This they were ready to say to every one they met with, so that, in saying, I am holier than thou, they thought themselves holier than any; not only very good, as good as they should be, as good as they needed to be, but better than any of their neighbours. When they were accused (says God,) such a smoke as comes not from a quick fire, which soon becomes glowing and pleasant, but from a fire of wet wood, which burns all the day, and is nothing but smoke. Note, Nothing in men is more odious and offensive to God than a proud conceit of themselves, and contempt of others; for commonly those are most unholy of all, that think themselves holiest.

(2.) The controversy God had with them for this. The proof against them is plain; Behold, it is written before me, v. 6. It is written, to be remembered against them in time to come; for they may not perhaps be immediately reckoned with. The sins of sinners, and particularly the vain-glorying boasts and scorns of hypocrites, are laid up in store with God, Deut. xxiv. 34. And what is written shall be read and proceeded upon; "I will not keep silence always, though I may keep silence long." They shall not think him altogether such a one as themselves, as sometimes they have done; but he will recompense, even recompense into their bosom. These basely abuse religion, that honourable and sacred thing, which make their profession of it a matter of their pride, and the jealous will remorse them in their faces for it; the profession they boast of shall but serve to aggravate their condemnation.

[1.] The iniquity of their fathers shall come against them; not but that their own sin, deserved whatever judgments God brought upon them, and much heavier; and they owned it, Ezra ix. 13. But God would not have wrought so great a desolation upon them, if he had not therein had the sins of their fathers. Therefore in the last destruction of Jerusalem God is said to bring upon them the blood of the Old Testament martyrs, even that of Abel, Matth. xxiii. 35. God will reckon with them, not only for their fathers' idols but for their high places, their burning incense, upon the mountains and the hills, though perhaps it was to the true God only. This was blaspheming or profaning the name of the Lord, making what should be hallowed, and set apart under heaven, and never to be shared in by any, sacred into their bosom. God will render into the bosom, not only of his open enemies, (Ps. lxxxix. 12.) but of his false and treacherous friends, the reproach wherewith they have reproached him.
Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine
is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy
it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for
my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy
them all. 9. And I will bring forth a seed
out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor
of my mountains: and none elect shall in-
herit it, and my servants shall dwell there.
10. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and
the valley of Achor a place for the herds to
lie down in, for my people that have sought me.

This is expounded by St. Paul, Rom. xi. 1—5,
where, when upon occasion of the rejection of the Jews,
it is asked, Hath God then cast away his people? He
answers, No; for, at this time there is a remnant ac-
cording to the election of grace. This prophecy has
reference to that distinguished remnant. When
that hypocritical nation is to be destroyed, God will
separate and secure to himself some from among
them; some of the Jews shall be brought to em-
brace the Christian faith, shall be added to the
church, and so be saved. And our Saviour has
told us, that for the sake of these elect, the days
of the destruction of the Jews should be shortened, and
a very good portion for them; which otherwise
would have proceeded to that degree, that no flesh should be
saved, Matt. xxiv. 22. Now,
1. This is illustrated here by a comparison, v. 8.
When a vine is so blasted and withered, that there
seems to be no sap or life in it, and therefore the
dresser of the vineyard is inclined to pluck it up, or
cut it down, yet, if ever so little of the juice of the
grape be left, and fit to make new wine, be found, though but
in one cluster, a stand-by interposes, and says,
Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it: there is life in
the root, and hope that yet it may become good for
something. Good men are blessings to the places
where they live; and sometimes God spares whole
cities and nations for the sake of a few such in them.
How ambitious should we be of this honour, not only
to be distinguished from others, but serviceable to
others!
2. Here is a description of those that shall make
up this saved saving remnant; (1.) They are such as
serve God; It is for my servant's sake, (v. 8.)
and they are my servants that shall dwell there, v. 9.
God's faithful servants, however they are looked
upon, are the best friends their country has; and
those who serve him, therein serve their generation.
(2.) They are such as seek God; as make it the
end of their lives to glorify God, and the business of
their lives to call upon him. It is for my people
that have sought me. They that seek God shall
find him, and shall find him their bountiful Re-
warder.
3. Here is an account of the mercy God has in
store for them. The remnant that shall return out
of captivity shall have a happy settlement again in
their own land, and that by an hereditary right, as
a seed out of Jacob, in whom the family is kept up
and the entail preserved; and from whom, as from
the seed sown, shall spring a numerous increase;
and these typify the remnant of Jacob that shall be
incorporated into the gospel-church by faith. (1.)
They shall have a good portion for themselves. They
shall inherit my mountains, the holy moun-
tains on which Jerusalem and the temple were built:
or, the mountains of Canaan, the land of promise, ty-
pifying the covenant of grace, which all God's serv-
ants, his elect, both inhabit and inherit; they make
it their refuge, their rest and residence, so they
dwell in it, are at home in it; and they have taken
it to be their heritage for ever, and it shall be to
them an inheritance incorruptible, God's chosen,
the spiritual seed of praying Jacob, shall be the in-
heritors of his mountains of bliss and joy, and shall
be carried safe to them through the vale of tears.
(2.) They shall have a green pasture, v. 10. Sharon
and the valley of Achor shall again be
as well replenished as ever they were, with cattle.
Sharon lay westward, near Joppa. Achor lay east-
ward, near Jordan; which intimates, that they shall
recover the possession of the whole land, that they
shall have wherewith to stock it all, and that they
shall pleasantly enjoy it, and there shall be none to
disturb them, or make them afraid. God's spiritual
ordinances are the fields and valleys where the sheep
of Christ shall go in and out, and find pasture,
(John x. 9.) and where they are made to lie down,
(Ps. xxiii. 2.) as Israel's herds in the valley of
Achor, Hos. n. 15.

11. But ye are they that forsake the
Lord, that forget my holy mountain, that
prepare a table for that troop, and that fur-
nish the drink-offering unto that number.
12. Therefore will I number you to the
sword, and ye shall all bow down to the
slaughter: because when I called, ye did
not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear:
but did evil before mine eyes, and did
choose that wherein I delighted not. 13.
Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold,
my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hun-
gry: behold, my servants shall drink, but
ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants
shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed:
14. Behold, my servants shall sing for joy
of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart,
and shall howl for vexation of spirit.
15. And ye shall leave your name for a curse
unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall
slay thee, and call his servants by another
name: 16. That he who blesseth himself in
the earth, shall bless himself in the God of
truth; and he that swareth in the earth,
shall swear by the God of truth; because
the former troubles are forgotten, and be-
cause they are hid from mine eyes.

Here the different states of the godly and wicked,
of the Jews that believed, and of those that still
persisted in unbelief, are set the one over against
the other, as life and death, good and evil, the blessing
and the curse.
1. Here is the fearful doom of those that persisted
in their idolatry after the deliverance out of Baby-
lon, and in infidelity after the preaching of the
gospel of Christ. The doom is the same upon both;
(v. 12.) I will number you to the sword, as sheep
for the slaughter, and there shall be no escaping,
no standing out, ye shall all bow down to it." God's
judgments come, 1. Regularly, and are executed
according to the commission. Those fall by the
sword, that are numbered or counted out to it, and
none besides. Though the sword seems to devor
promiscuously one as well as another, yet it is made
to know its number, and shall not exceed. 2. In-
resistibly; the strongest and most stout-hearted sin-
ers shall be forced to bow before them; for none
ever hardened their hearts against God, and pros-
pered. Now observe what the sins are, that num-
ber them to the sword.
(1.) Idolatry was the ancient sin; (v. 11.) Ye are they, who instead of seeking me, and serving me as my people, forsake the Lord, disown him, and cast out all the hand that is not for God. The mountain, (the privileges it confers, and the obligations it lays you under,) to burn incense upon the mountains of your idols, (v. 7.) and have deserted the only living and true God.” They prepared a table for that troth of deities, which the heathen worshiped, and part out drink-offerings to that numberless number of them; for they that these gods, as they were, costing, because hundreds of cities, tens of their nations, and of their altars were as thick as heaves in the furrows of the field, Hos. xii. 11. Some take God and Meni, which we translate a troph and a number, to be the proper names of two of their idols, answering to Jupiter and Mercury; whatever they were, their worshippers spared no cost to do them honour; they prepared a table for them, and filled out mixed wine for drink-offerings to them; they would pinch their families rather than stint their devotions, which should shame the worshippers of the true God out of their niggardliness.

(2.) Infidelity was the sin of the latter Jews; (v. 12.) When I called ye did not answer; which refers not only v. 12. to the times of the Jews, but to this present day. I stretched out my hands to a rebellious people; and that is applied to those who rejected the gospel. Our Lord Jesus himself called, (he stood and cried, John vii. 37.) but they did not hear, they would not answer; they were not convinced by his reasonings, nor moved by his expostulations; both the fair warnings he gave them of death and ruin, and the fair offers he made them of life and happiness, were slighted, and made no impression upon them. Yet this was not all; Ye did evil before mine eyes, not by surprise, or through inadvertency, but with deliberation; Ye did choose that wherein I delighted not; he means, which he utterly detest and abhorred. It is not strange that those who will not be persuaded to choose that which is good, persist in their choice and pursuit of that which is evil. See the malignity of sin; it is evil in God’s eyes, highly offensive to him, and yet it is committed before his eyes, in his sight and presence, and in contempt of him; it is likewise a contradiction to the will of God; it is doing that, of choice, which we know will displease him.

11. The aggravation of this doom, from the consideration of the happy state of those that were brought to repentance and faith. The blessedness of those that serve God, and the woful condition of those that rebel against him, are here set the one over against the other, that they may serve as a foil to each other, v. 13.—16. 1. God’s servants may well think themselves happy, and for ever indebted to that free grace which made them so, when they consider their miserable state, and had not been born, for want of that grace, who are hardened, and likely to perish for ever in unbelief, and what a narrow escape they had of being among them. See ch. lxvi. 24. 2. It will add to the grief of those that perish, to see the happiness of God’s servants, whom they had hated and vilified, and looked upon with the utmost disdain; and especially to think that they may have all their hope, and have their bliss, and have their own fault. It made the torment of the rich man in hell the more grievous, that he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom; (Luke xvi. 23.) see Luke xiii. 58. Sometimes the providence of God makes such a difference as this between good and bad in this world, and the prosperity of the righteous becomes a grievous eye-sore and vexation of heart to the wicked; Ps. cxlix. 10. It will, however, be so in the great day. We fools

counted his life madness, and his end without hope; but now, how is he numbered with the saints, and his lot is among the chosen!

12. The difference of their states here lies in two things.

(1.) In point of comfort and satisfaction. [1.] God’s servants shall eat and drink; they shall have the bread of life to feed, to feast upon continually, shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of his house, and shall want nothing that is good for them. Heaven’s happiness will be to them an everlasting refreshment; they shall want nothing that is good for them. However, hunger and thirst after. But those who set their hearts upon the world, and place their happiness in that, shall be hungry and thirsty, always empty, always craving; for it is not bread, it surfeits, but it satisfies not. In communion with God, and dependence upon him, there is full satisfaction, but in sinful pursuits there is nothing but disappointment.

[2.] God’s servants shall rejoice and sing for joy of heart; they have constant cause for joy, and there is nothing that may be an occasion of grief to them, but they have an allay sufficient for it. As far as faith is an act and exercise, they have a heart to rejoice, and their joy is their strength. They shall rejoice in their hope, because it shall not make them ashamed. Heaven will be a world of everlastings delights; there shall be no sorrowing; suffering shall be taken from them; but on the other hand, they that forsake the Lord shut themselves out from all true joy, for they shall be ashamed of their vain confidence in themselves, and their own righteousness, and the hopes they had built thereon. When the expectations of bliss, wherewith they had flattered themselves, are frustrated, O what confusion will fill their faces! Then they shall cry for sorrow of heart, and heart for vexation of spirit; perhaps in this world, when their laughter shall be turned into mourning and their joy into heaviness; at the last, in that world, where the torment will be endless, ceaseless, and remediless; nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, to eternity. Let these two be compared; Now he is comforted, and Thou art tortured; and which of the two will we choose to take our lot with?

(2.) In point of honour and reputation, v. 15, 16. The memory of the just is, and shall be, blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot. [1.] The name of the idolaters and unbelievers shall be left for a curse, shall be loaded with ignominy, and made for ever infamous. It shall be used in giving bad names to the just, (Deut. xxxii. 5.) and in their presence. [2.] But God’s servants are not afraid of bad names, because of the alabaster vessels they are set in, and the perfumed ointments they are anointed with; God make thee as miserable as a Jew. It shall be for a curse to God’s chosen, for a warning to them; they shall be afraid of falling under the curse upon the Jewish nation; of perishing by the same example of unbelief. The curse of these whom God rejects, should make his chosen stand in awe. The Lord God shall slay thee; he shall quite destroy thee; (Deut. xxvi. 19.) and in their place take them off from being a people; they shall no longer live as a nation, nor ever be incorporated again. [2.] The name of God’s chosen shall become a blessing; He shall call his servants by another name. The children of the covenant shall no longer be called Jews, but Christians; and to them, under that name, all the promises and privileges of the new covenant shall be confirmed upon them. It shall be a name of honor; and shall be blessed in the earth, all the world over. God shall have servants out of all nations, that shall all be dignified with this new name. First, They shall give honour to God both in their prayers and in their solemn oaths; in their addresses for his favour as their felicity, and for his appearance to his justice as their Judge. This is a part of the homage we owe to God; we must bless our-
selves in him, we must reckon that we have enough to make us happy, that we need no more, and can desire no more, if we have him for our God. It is of great consequence to determine what that is, which we bless ourselves in, which we must please ourselves with, and value ourselves by our interest in. Worldly people bless themselves in the abundance they have of this world’s goods; (Ps. xlix. 18. Luke xii. 19.) but God’s servants bless themselves in him, as a God all-sufficient for them. He is their Crown of glory and Diadem of beauty, their Strength and Portion. By him also they shall swear, and not by any false god. Upon judgment they shall refer themselves, from whom every man’s judgment doth proceed. Secondly, They shall give honour to him as the God of truth; the God of the Amen; so the word is. Some understand it of Christ, who is himself the Amen, the faithful Witness, (Rev. iii. 14.) and in whom all the promises are yea and amen, 2 Cor. i. 20. In him we must bless ourselves, and by him we must swear unto the Lord, and covenant with him. He that is blessed in the earth, (so some read it,) shall be blessed in the true God, for Christ is the true God, and eternal life, 1 John v. 20. And it was promised of old that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed, Gen. xii. 3. Some read it, He shall bless the families of the earth with the God of the faithful people; in God as the God of their fathers he shall be blessed that has no more than to share in the blessings whereabouts they are blessed, to be dealt with as he deals with them. Thirdly, They shall give him honour as the Author of this blessed change, which they have the experience of; they shall think themselves happy in having him for their God, who has made them to forget their former troubles, the remembrance of them being swallowed up in their present comforts; because they are hid from God’s eyes, they are quite taken away; for if there were any remainder of their troubles, God would be sure to have his eye upon it, in compassion to them and concern for them. They shall no longer feel them, for God will no longer see them: He is pleased to speak as if he would make himself easy by making them easy; and therefore they shall with a great deal of satisfaction bless themselves in him.

17. For, behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. 18. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. 19. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. 20. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die a hundred years old; but the sinner, being a hundred years old, shall be accursed. 21. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. 22. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. 23. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble: for they are the seed of the blessed Lord, and their offspring with them. 24. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. 25. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.

If these promises were in part fulfilled when the Jews, after their return out of captivity, were settled in peace in their own land, and brought as it were into a new world, yet they were to have their accomplishment in the great church, militant first, and at length triumphant; The Jerusalem that is from above is free, and is the mother of us all. In the graces and comforts which believers have in and from Christ, we are to look for this new heaven and new earth. It is in the gospel that old things are passed away, and all things are become new, and by it that those who are in Christ are new creatures, Col. iii. 10. It was a mighty and happy change that was deserv’d of all the graces and comforts they were promised; but here it rises much higher, even the former world shall be forgotten, and shall no more come in mind. They that were converted to the Christian faith were so transported with the comfort of it, that all the comforts they were before acquainted with, became as nothing to them; not only their foregoing griefs, but their forgoing joys, were lost and swallowed up in this. The glorified saints will therefore have forgotten this world, because they will be entirely taken up with the other. For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth. See how inexhaustible the divine power is; the same God that created one heaven and earth, can create another. See how entire the happiness of the saints is: it shall be all of a piece: with the new heavens God will create them (if they have occasion for it to make them happy) a new earth too. The world is yours, if you be Christ’s, 1 Cor. iii. 22. When God is reconciled to us, which gives us a new heaven, the creatures too are reconciled to us, which gives us a new earth. The future glory of the saints will be so entirely different from what they ever knew before, that it may well be called a new heaven and a new earth. Behold, I make all things new, Rev. xxi. 5. 1. There shall be new joys. For, (1.) All the church’s friends, and all that belong to her, shall rejoice; (v. 18.) You shall be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create. The new things which God creates in and by his gospel, are, and shall be, matter of everlasting joy to all believers. My servants shall be glad, (v. 13.) for they are the children of Jerusalem, who have pleasure in the prosperity of his servants; (v. 19.) I will rejoice in Jerusalem’s joy, and will joy in my people; for in all their affliction he was afflicted. God will not only rejoice in the church’s well-doing, but will himself rejoice to do her good, and rest in his love to her, Zech. iii. 17. What God rejoices in, it becomes us to rejoice in. (2.) The prosperity of the church shall be a joy to himself, who has pleasure in the prosperity of his servants; (v. 19.) I will rejoice in Jerusalem’s joy, and will joy in my people; for in all their affliction he was afflicted. God will not only rejoice in the church’s well-doing, but will himself rejoice to do her good, and rest in his love to her, Zech. iii. 17. What God rejoices in, it becomes us to rejoice in. (3.) There is no such happy beginning of the new heaven and new earth, and new world, as this happy condition of the church; The voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her. If this relate to any state of the church in this life, it means
no more than that the former occasions of grief shall not return, but God’s people shall long enjoy an uninterrupted tranquility. But in heaven it shall have a full accomplishment; for both of the perpetuity, and the perpetuity of the promised joy; there all tears shall be wiped away.

2. There shall be new life, v. 20. Untimely deaths by the sword or sickness shall be no more known as they have been, and by this means there shall be no more the voice of crying, v. 19. When there shall be no more death, there shall be no more sorrow, i. 18. As death shall reign by righteousness, so shall life reign by righteousness, Rom. v. 4, 21.

(1.) Believers through Christ shall be satisfied with life, though it be ever so short on earth. If an infant end its days quickly, yet it shall not be reckoned to die untimely, for the shorter its life is, the longer will its rest be; though death reign over them that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, yet they, dying in the arms of Christ, the second Adam, and believing to his kingdom, are not to be called infants of days, but even the child shall be reckoned to die a hundred years old, for he shall rise again at full age, shall rise to eternal life. Some understand of children who in their childhood are so eminent for wisdom and grace, and by death nipt in the blossom, that they may be said to die a hundred years old, for of old had it been ordered that they shall fill their days with the fruits of righteousness, which they shall still bring forth in old age, to show that the Lord is upright, and then it is a good old age. An old man, who is wise, and good, and useful, may truly be said to have filled his days. Old men, who have their hearts upon the world, have never filled their days, never have enough of this world, but would continue on it as long as possible. But the sinner, one diæter diem—full of days, who, with Simeon, having seen God’s salvation, desires now to depart in peace.

(2.) Unbelievers shall be unsatisfied and unhappy in life, though it be ever so long. The sinner, though he live to be a hundred years old, shall be accursed; his living so long shall be no token to him of the divine favour and blessing, nor shall it be any shelter to him from the divine wrath and curse; the sentence he lies under will certainly be executed, and his long life is but a long reprobation; yea, it is itself a curse to him, for the longer he lives, the more wrath he treasures up against the day of wrath, and the more sins he will have to answer for. So that the matter is not great, whether our lives on earth be long or short, but whether we live the lives of saints or the lives of sinners.

3. There shall be a new enjoyment of the comfort of life; that, whereas before it was very uncertain and precarious, their enemies inhabited the houses which they built, and ate the fruit of the trees which they planted, now it shall be otherwise; they shall build houses, and inhabit them, shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them, v. 21, 22. This intimates that the labour of their hands shall be abundant, and they shall gain what they aimed at; and what they have gained shall be preserved and secured to them; they shall enjoy it comfortably, and nothing shall imbrther it to them, and they shall live to enjoy it long. Strangers shall not break in upon them, to expel them, and plant themselves in their room, as sometimes they have done; Mine elect shall wear out, or long enjoy, the works of their hands, which is, as it were, to wear well; it is the work of their hands, which they themselves have laboured for, and it is most comfortable to enjoy that, and not to eat the bread of idleness or bread of deceit; if we have a heart to enjoy it, that is the gift of God’s grace; (Ecc. iii. 13.) and if we live to enjoy it long, it is the gift of God’s providence, for that is here promised; As the days of a tree, are the days of my people; as the days of an oak, (ch. vi. 13.) whose substance is in it, though it cast its leaves; though it be stripped every year, yet it sends forth leaves again, and becomes all new, as the days of the tree of life; so the LXX. Christ is to them the tree of life, and in him believers enjoy all those spiritual comforts which are typified by the abundance of temporal blessings here promised; and it shall not be in the power of their enemies to deprive them of these blessings, or disturb them in the enjoyment of them.

4. There shall be a new generation rising up in their stead, to inherit and enjoy these blessings; (v. 23.) They shall not labour in vain, for they shall not only enjoy the work of their hands themselves, but they shall leave it with satisfaction to those that shall come after them, and not with such a melancholy prospect as Solomon did; (Eccl. ii. 19.) They shall not beget and bring forth children for trouble; for theirs is the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and there is a blessing entailed upon them by descent from their ancestors, which their offspring with them shall partake of, and shall be, as well as they, the seed of the blessed of the Lord. They shall not bring forth for trouble; for,

(1.) God will make their children that rise up come, forts to them; they shall have the joy of seeing them walk in the path of peace, v. 22. And (2.) He will make the times that come after correspond with those; when they shall be good, so it shall be well with them; they shall not be brought forth to days of trouble; nor shall it ever be said, Blessed is the womb that bare not. In the gospel-church Christ’s name shall be borne up by a succession; A seed shall serve him, (Ps. xxii. 50.) the seed of the blessed of the Lord.

5. There shall be a good correspondence between the two, for

But when they call, I will answer. God will prevent their prayers with the blessings of his goodness; David did but say, I will confess, and God forgave, Ps. xxxii. 5. The father of the prodigal met him in his return; While they are yet speaking, before they have finished their prayer, I will give them the thing they pray for, or the assurances and carnets of it. These are high expressions of God’s readiness to hear prayer; and this appears much more in the grace of the gospel than it did under the law; we owe the comfort of it to the mediation of Christ as our Advocate with the Father, and are obliged in gratitude to give a ready ear to God’s calls.

6. There shall be a good correspondence between them and their neighbours; (v. 23.) The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, as they did in Noah’s ark. God’s people, though they are as sheep in the midst of wolves, shall be safe and unhurt; for God will not so much break the power, and tie the hands, of their enemies, as formerly; but he will turn their hearts, will alter their dispositions by his grace. When Paul, who had been a persecutor of the disciples, (who, being of the tribe of Benjamin, ravened as a wolf, Gen. xlix. 27.) joined himself to them, and they fed together, as the shepherds of their flock, the Lord i. 11. The enemies of the church ceased to do the mischief they had done, and its members ceased to be so quarrelling with, and injurious to, one another as they had done; and as they had been, without or from within to hurt or destroy, none to disturb it, much less to ruin it, in allthe holy mountain; as was promised, ch. xi. 9. For, (1.) Men shall be changed; the lion shall no more be a beast of prey, as perhaps he never would have been if sin had not entered, but shall eat straw like the bullock, shall know his owner, and his master’s crib, as the
or does. When those that lived by spoil and rapine, and coveted to enrich themselves, right or wrong, are brought by the grace of God to accommodate themselves to their condition, to live by honest labour, and to be content with such possessions as they have; when they that stole steal no more, but work with their hands the thing that is good, then this is fulfilled, that "the lion shall eat straw like the bullock." 2. Satan shall be chained, the dragon bound; for "dust shall be the serpent's meat again."

That great enemy, when he has been let loose, has glutted and regained himself with the precious blood of his enemies; he has inflated his heart, and has made a jest of the poor, and with the precious souls of sinners, who by his instigation have become persecutors, and have ruined themselves for ever; but now he shall be confined to dust, according to the sentence, "On thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat," Gen. iii. 14.

All the enemies of God's church, that are subtle and venomous as serpents, shall be conquered and subdued, and be made to lick the dust. Christ shall reign as Zion's King, till all the enemies of his kingdom be made his footstool, and theirs too. In the holy mountain above, and there only, shall this promise have its full accomplishment, that there shall be none to hurt or destroy.

CHAP. LXVI.

The scope of this chapter is much the same as that of the foregoing chapter, and many expressions of it are the same; it therefore looks the same way, to the different state of the church and of the Jews, at their return out of captivity; but that typifying the rejection of the Jews in the days of the Messiah, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the setting up of the gospel-kingdom in the world. The chapter is applied to Christ, and the passage is said to open to the dismantling of the temple by the planting of the Christian church; (Acts vii. 49, 50.) which may serve as a key to the whole chapter.

We have here, I. The stoning of the Messiah, and its parallel in comparison with moral duties, and an intimation therein of his purpose shortly to put an end to the temple and sacrifice, and reject those that adhered to them, v. 1-4.
II. The salvation of God will in due time work for his people, out of the hands of their oppressors, (v. 5,) speaking terror to the persecutors, (v. 6.) and comfort to the persecuted, a speedy and complete deliverance, (v. 7-9.) a joyful settlement, (v. 10, 11.) the accession of the Gentiles to them, and abundance of satisfaction therein, v. 12-14.

III. The terrible vengeance which God will bring upon the enemies of his church and people, v. 15-18.

IV. The happy establishment of the church upon large and sure foundations, its constant attendance on God, and triumph over its enemies, v. 19-25.

And we may well expect that this evangelical prophet, here, in the shadow of prophecy, should, (as he does,) look as far forward as to the latter days, to the last day, to the days of eternity.

1. Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

2. For all those things hast thou made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

3. He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol: yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.

4. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spoke, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.

Here.

I. The temple is slighted in comparison with a gracious soul, v. 1, 2. The Jews in the prophet's time, and afterward, in Christ's time, gloried much in the temple, and promised themselves great things from it; to humble them therefore, and to shake their vain confidence, both the prophets and Christ foretold the ruin of the temple, that God would leave it, and then it would soon be desolate.

After it was destroyed by the Chaldeans, it soon recovered itself, and the ceremonial services were revived with it; but by the Romans it was made a perpetual desolation, and the ceremonial law was abolished with it. That the world might be prepared for this, they were often told, as here, of what little account the temple was with God.

1. That he did not need it. Heaven is the throne of his glory and government; there he sits, infinitely exalted in the highest dignity and dominion, above all blessing and praise. The earth is his footstool, on which he stands, overruling all the affairs of it according to his will. If God has so bright a throne, so large a footstool, where then is the house they can build unto God, that can be the residence of his glory, or, where is the place of his rest? What satisfaction can they have among the Gentiles, or among the enemy, or among his own people, made with men's hands? What occasion has he, as we have, for a house to repose himself in, who faints not, neither is weary, who neither slumbers nor sleeps? Or, if he had occasion, he would not tell us, (Ps. i. 12.) for all these things hath his hand made, heaven and all its courts, earth and all its borders, and all the hosts of both. All these things have been, and are, and will be, forever. But the temple of God, who was happy from eternity before they were, and therefore could not be benefited by them. All these things are; so some read it; they still continue, upheld by the same power that made them; so that our goodness extends not to him. If he would have had a house for himself to dwell in, he would have made one himself when he made the world; and he could have made one better, and in a day, as other creatures do, according to his ordinances; so that he had no need of a temple made with hands.

2. That he would not need it, so as he would a humble, penitent, gracious heart. He has a heaven and earth of his own making; and a temple of man's making; but he overlooks them all, that he may look with favour to him that is poor in spirit, humble and serious, self-abasing and self-denying, whose heart is truly contrite for sin, penitent for it, in pain to get it pardoned, and that trembles at God's word, not as Felix did, with a transient qualm that was over when the sermon was done, but with an habitual awe of God's majesty and purity, and an habitual dread of his justice and wrath; such a heart is a living sacrifice, and where such a heart is, he dwells there, and it is the place of his rest; it is like heaven and earth, his throne and his footstool.

II. Sacrifices are slighted when they come from ungracious hands; the sacrifices of the wicked is not only unacceptable, but it is an abomination to the Lord; (Prov. xv. 8.) this is largely shown here, v. 3-6. Observe.

1. How detestable their sacrifices were to God. The carnal Jews, after their return out of captivity, though they relapsed not to idolatry, grew very careless and loose in the service of God; they brought the torn, and the lame, and the sick, for sacrifice; (Mal. i. 8, 13.) and this made their services abominable to God; they had no regard to their sacrifices, and therefore how could they think God
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should have any regard to them? The unbelieving Jews, after the gospel was preached, and in it notice given of the offering up of the great Sacrifice, which put an end to all the ceremonial services, continued to offer sacrifices, as if the law of Moses had been still in force, and could have made the camera thereunto perfect: this was an abomination; He that kills an ox for his own table, is welcome to do it; but he that now kills it, and thus kills it for God, is not welcome to offer a maimed offering to God as murder itself; he that does it, does in effect set aside Christ's sacrifice, treats under foot the blood of the covenant, and makes himself accessory to the guilt of the body and blood of the Lord; setting up what Christ did to abolish.

1. He that sacrifices a lamb, if it be a corrupt thing, and not the male in his flock, the best he has, if he think to put God off with anything to him, instead of pleasing him; it is as if he cut off a dog's neck; a creature in the eye of the law so vile, that whereas an ass might be redeemed, the price of a dog was never to be brought into the treasury; Deut. xxiii. 18. He that offers an oblation, a meat-offering, or drink-offering, is as if he thought to make atonement with swine's blood; a creature that made his own sacrifice, that was eaten by God, as abominable, (ch. xxv. 4.) much more the blood of it. He that burns incense to God, and so puts contempt upon the incense of Christ's intercession, is as if he blessed an idol; it was as great an affront to God as if they had paid their devotions to a false god. Hypocrisy and profaneness are as provoking as idolatry.

2. What their wickedness was, which made their sacrifices thus detestable; it is because they have chosen their own ways, the ways of their own wicked hearts, and not only their hands do, but their soul delights in, their abominations; they were vicious and immoral in their conversations, chose the way of sin rather than the way of God's commandments, and took pleasure in that which was provoking to God; this made their sacrifices so offensive to God, ch. 11. 11.-15. Those that pretend to honour God by a profession of religion, and yet live wicked lives, put an affront upon him, as if he were the Patron of sin. And that which was an aggravation of their wickedness, was, that they persisted in it, notwithstanding the frequent calls given them to repent and reform; they turned a deaf ear to all the warnings of divine justice and all the offers of divine grace; When ye acknowledged not the voice, etc., said the Lord, ch. xxv. 14. 15. And the same follows here that did there; They did evil before mine eyes. Being dead to what he said, they cared not what he saw, but chose that in which they knew he delighted not. How could they expect to please him in their devotions, who took no care to please him in their conversations, but, on the contrary, designed to provoke him?

3. The doom passed upon them for this: They chose their own ways, therefore, says God, I also will choose their delusions; They have made their choice, (as Mr. Gataker paraphrases it,) and now I will make mine; they have taken what course they pleased with me, and I will take what course I please with them. I will choose their illusions, or mockeries; if As they have mocked God, and disdained his judgments; they will give them up to their enemies, to be trampled upon and insulted by them. Or, They shall be deceived by those vain confidences with which they have deceived themselves. God will make their sin their punishment; they shall be beaten with their own rod, and hurried into ruin by their own delusions. (ch. lix. 1.) When they shall be turned among them, will bring upon them that which shall be a terror to them, that which they themselves have been afraid of, and thought to escape by sinful shift. Unbelieving hearts, and unpurified, unpacified consciences, need no more to make them miserable, than to have their own fears brought upon them.

5. Hear the word of the Lord; ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed. 6. A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies. 7. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. 3. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. 9. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord; shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God. 10. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her; rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: 11. That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations, that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. 12. For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream; then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dallied upon her knees. 13. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. 14. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb; and the hand of the Lord shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation towards his enemies.

The prophet, having denounced God's judgments against an hypocritical nation, that made a jest of God's word, and would not answer him when he called to them, here turns his speech to those that trembled at his word, to comfort and encourage them; they shall not be involved in the judgments that are coming upon their unbelieving nation. Ministers must distinguish thus, that, when they speak terror to the wicked, they may not make the hearts of the righteous sad. Bone Christiane, hoc nihil ad te—Good Christian, this is nothing to thee. The prophet having assured those that trembled at God's word, of a gracious look from him, (v. 2.) here brings them a gracious message from him. The word of God has comforts in store for these that by means have satisfaction for sins brought upon them. There were these (v. 4.) who, when God spake, would not hear; but if some will not, others will. If the heart tremble at the word, the ear will be open to it. Now what is here said to them?

1. Let them know that God will plead their just but injured cause against their persecutors; (v. 5.) Your brethren that hated you, said, Let the Lord be glorified. But he shewed no fear to work joy. This perhaps might have reference to the case of some of the Jews at their return out of captivity; but no-
thing like it appears in the history, and therefore it is
rather to be referred to the first preachers and pro-
phets of the gospel. To the Roman church it more
than any other case it is very applicable. Observe, 1. How
the faithful servants of God were persecuted; their bre-
threatened them. The apostles were Jews by birth, and
yet even in the cities of the Gentiles, the Jews they
met with there were their most bitter and im-
placable enemies, and stirred up the Gentiles against
them. The sparse complains, (Cant. i. 6.) that her
mother hated them, was not yet, as of old, to be reas-
cribed our Lord Jesus with this. Thine own nation have
delivered thee unto me, John xviii. 33. Their
brethren, who should have loved them, and encour-
gaged them, for their work's sake, hated them, and
cast them out of their synagogues, excommunicated
them, as if they had been the greatest blenishes,
which were the greatest blessings of their church
and nation. This was a fruit of the old en-
mity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of
the woman. They that hated Christ hated his dis-
ciples, because they supported his kingdom and in-
terest; (John xv. 18.) and they cast them out for his
name's sake, because they were called by his name,
and called upon his name, and laid out themselves
to advance his name. Note, It is no new thing for
churches and ministers to be put out of their own
society, that was intended for her defence, to be turned
against her best friends, by the treachery of her go-
nors. And they that did this said, Let the Lord be
glorified; they pretended conscience, and a zeal
for the honour of God and the church in it, and did
it with all the formalities of devotion. Our Saviour
explains this, and seems to have reference to it,
John xvi. 2. They shall put you out of their own
synagogues, and whosoever killest thou will think that he
does God service. In nomine Domini inquit omne
mamut-In the name of the Lord commences evil
of every kind. Or, we may understand it as spoken
in defence of God. You say God will be glorified
in your deliverance; let him be glorified then; let
him make speed, and hasten his work; (ch. v. 19.)
let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. 3.
Some take it to be the language of the profane Jews
in captivity, bverting their brethren that hoped for
deliverance, and ridiculing the expectations they
often comforted themselves with, that God would
shortly be glorified in it. They thus did what they
could to shame the counsel of the poor, Ps. xvi. 6.
2. How they were encouraged under these perse-
cutitions, and went forward though they were a little while;
your enemies hate you and oppress you, your brethren hate you and cast you out, but
your Father in heaven loves you, and will appear for
you when no one else will or dare. His provi-
dence shall order things so as shall be for comfort to
you, he shall appear for your joy, and for the
confusion of those that abuse you and trample on you;
you shall be ashamed of their enmity to you. This
was fulfilled, when, upon the signals given of
Jerusalem's approaching ruin, the Jews hearts fail-
et them for fear; but the disciples of Christ, whom
they had hated and persecuted, lifted up their heads
with joy, knowing that their redemption drew nigh,
Luke xxi. 26, 28. Though God seem to hide him-
self, he will in due time show himself. 4. As God's appearances for
them will be such as will make a great noise in the
world; (v. 6.) There shall be a voice of noise from
the city, from the temple. Some make it the joyful
and triumphant voice of the church's friends; others
the frightful, lamenting voice of her enemies, sur-
prised in the city, and fleeing in vain to the temple
for refuge. These voices do but echo to the voice
of the Lord, who is now rendering a recompence to
his enemies; and those that will not hear him speak-
ing this terror, shall hear them returning the alarms
of it in doleful shrieks. We may well think what
a confused noise there was in the city and temple,
when Jerusalem was taken and burned by the Romans.
Some think this prophecy was fulfilled in the perversities that went before that de-
struction of Jerusalem, related by Josephus in his
History of the wars of the Jews; (ib. 7. cap. 31.) that the temple doors flew open suddenly of their
own accord, and the priests heard a noise of motion
or shifting in the most holy place, and presently a
frightful noise was heard, which, as Josephus says,
after, one Jesus Bar-Annaus went up and down the
city, at the feast of tabernacles, continually cry-
ing, A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a
voice from the four winds; a voice against Jerusa-
lem, and the temple; a voice against all this people.
III. Let them know that God will set up a church
for himself in the world, which shall be abundantly
replenished in a little time; (v. 7.) Before she tra-
velled she brought forth. This is to be applied in
the type to the deliverance of the Jews out of their
captivity in Babylon, which was brought about very
easily and silently, without any pain or struggle,
such as was when they were brought out of Egypt:
that was done by might and power, (Deut. iv. 35.)
but this is by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, Zech.
12. 8. This is the last time of the world, and not the
first, and yet the mother was never in labour for it;
before her pain came she was delivered. This is
altogether surprising, uncommon, and without pre-
cedent, unless in the story which the Egyptian mid-
wives told of the Hebrew women, (Exod. i. 19.)
that they were lively, and were delivered ere the
midwives came in unto them. But shall the earth
be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the
sea? (v. 11.) and no, it is the work of some weeks in the spring to renew
the face of the earth, and cover it with its products.
Some read it to the same purport with the next clause, Shall a land be brought forth in one day,
or shall a nation be born at once? Is it to be im-
agined that a woman at one birth should bring chil-
dren sufficient to people a country, and that they
should in an instant grow up to maturity? No; some-
thing like this was done in the creation; but God
has since rested from all such works, and leaves sec-
cend causes to produce their effects gradually. A
hill failit per saltum-He does nothing abruptly.
Yet in this case, as soon as Zion travelled, she
brought forth. Cyrus's proclamation was no sooner
issued out, than the captives were formed into a
nation, and began to return to their own country on
the way to their own land. And the reason is given,
(v. 9.) because it is in the Lord's doing; he under-
takes it, whose work is perfect. If he bring to the
birth in preparing his people for deliverance, he
will cause to bring forth in the accomplishment of
the deliverance. When every thing is ripe and
ready for their release, and the number of their
months is accomplished, so that the children are
brought to the birth, shall not I then give strength
to bring forth, but leave mother and babe to perish
together in the most miserable case? How will this
agree with the divine pity? Shall I begin a work,
and not go through with it? How will that agree
with the divine power and perfection? Am I he
that causes to bring forth, (so the following clause may
mean, and to) and as I, says the Lord, so I will
cause to bring forth; (v. 12.) and as I will cause to bring forth,
will I restrain Zion? Will he not make her fruitful in a
blessed offspring to replenish the church? Or, Am
I he that begat, and should I restrain from bringing
forth? Did God beget the deliverance in his pur-
pose and promise, and will he not bring it forth in
the accomplishment and performance of his work?
I have no reason to doubt that there was a
this was a figure of the setting up of the Christian
church in the world, and the replenishing of that
Let them know that he who gives them this call to rejoice, will give them cause to do so, and hearts to do so, v. 12.—14.

1. He will give them cause to do so. For, (1.) They shall enjoy a long, uninterrupted course of prosperity; I will extend, or am extending, peace to her, all good to her, like a river that runs in a constant stream, still increasing till it be swallowed up, or its waters cease to flow. And thus shall it be with the gospel Church, and its converts; it is a river of peace; and when it is received in its place of rest, which shall go on like a river, supplying souls with all good, and making them fruitful, as a river does the lands it passes through, such a river of peace as the springs of the world’s comforts cannot send forth, and the dams of the world’s troubles cannot stop or drive back, or its sands rock it; such a river of peace as can carry off the ocean of boundless and endless tribulation. (2.) Thus shall the church make advantageous additions made to them; The glory of the Gentiles shall come to them like a flowing stream. Gentle converts shall come pouring into the church, and swell the river of her peace and prosperity; for they shall bring their glory with them; their wealth and honour, their power and interest shall all be devoted to the service of God, and employed in the advancement of God’s glory. For you shall suck from the breasts of her consolations; when you see such crowding for a share in those comforts, you shall be the more solicitous and the more vigorous to secure your share; not for fear of having the less for others’ coming in to partake of Christ,” (there is no danger of that, he has enough for all, and enough for each,) “but their zeal shall provoke them to a duty jealousy.” It is well when it does so, Rom. xi. 14. 2 Cor. ix. 2. (3.) God shall be glorified in all; and that ought to be more the matter of our joy than any thing else; (v. 14.) The hand of the Lord shall be known toward his servants, the protecting, supporting hand of his almighty power, the supplying, enriching hand of his inexhaustible goodness, the benefit which his servants have by both these, shall be known to his glory as well as theirs. And to make this the more illustrious, he will at the same time make known his indignation toward his enemies. God’s mercy and justice shall be both manifested and for ever magnified.

2. God will not only give them cause to rejoice, but will speak comfort to them, will speak it to their hearts; and it is he only that can do that, and make it fasten there. See what he will do for the comfort of his poor despised servants, and for the comfort of their children, their tender nurse; Ye shall be carried on her sides, under her arms, as little children are, and shall be dandled upon her knees, as darlings are, especially when they are weary and out of humour, and must be got to sleep. Those that are joined to the church, must be treated thus affectionately; the Great Shepherd gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom, and so must his other shepherds, that they may not be discouraged. Proselytes should be favourites. (2.) God will himself be their powerful Comforter; as one whom his mother comforts, when he is sick or sore, or upon any account in sorrow, so will I comfort you; not only with the rational arguments which a prudent father uses, but with the tender affections and compassion of a loving mother, that cares for her child, even when it has fallen and hurt itself, that she may quiet it and make it easy, or endeavours to pacify it after she has chid it and fallen out with it; Jer. xxxi. 20. Since I speak against him, my bowels are troubled for him; he is a dear son, he is a pleasant child. Thus the mother comforts. Thus you shall be comforted in Jerusalem, in the favours bestowed on the church, which you shall partake of, and in the thanksgivings offered by the church, which you shall concur with. (3.) They shall feel the
blessed effects of this comfort in their own souls; (v. 13.) When you see this, what a happy state the church is restored to, not only your tongues and your countenances, but your hearts shall rejoice. This was fulfilled in the wonderful satisfaction which Christ's disciples had in the success of their ministry. Christ, with an eye to that, tells them, (John xvi. 22.) Your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. Then your bowels, that were dried and withered, (the marrow of them quite exhausted,) shall recover a youthful strength and vigour, and shall flourish like an herb. Divine comforts reach the inward man, they are marrow and meat sweet to the bones, Prov. iii. 8. The bones are the strength of the body; those shall be made to flourish with these comforts; The joy of the Lord will be your strength, Neh. viii. 10.

15. For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. 16. For by fire and by his sword shall the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many. 17. They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens, behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord. 18. For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory. 19. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my name, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. 20. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord, out of all nations, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord. 21. And I will also take of them for priests, and for Levites, saith the Lord. 22. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. 23. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. 24. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

These verses, like the pillar of cloud and fire, have a dark side towards the enemies of God's kingdom, and all that are rebels against his crown, and a bright side towards his faithful, loyal subjects. Probably, it refers to the Jews in captivity in Babylon, of whom some are said to have been sent thither for their hurt; and those are they with whom God here threatens to proceed in his controversy, who hated to be reformed, and therefore should be ruined by the calamity, Jer. xxiv. 9. Others were sent thither for their good, and they should have the trouble of the overthrow of idolatry through it, and see many a good day after it. Degrees of the expressions here used are accommodated to that glorious dispensation; but doubtless it looks further, to the judgment for which Christ did come once, and will come again, into this world; and to the distinction which his word in both makes between the just and the unjust.

1. Christ will appear to the confusion and terror of all those that stand it against him; sometimes in temporal judgments. The Jews that persisted in infidelity were cut off by fire, and by his sword; the ruin was very extensive, the Lord then pleaded with all flesh; and it being his sword with which they are cut off, they are called his slain, sacrificed to his justice; and they shall be many. In the great day, the wrath of God shall be his sword, by which he will cut off and consume all the impious; and his word, when it takes hold of sinners' consciences, burns like fire, and is sharper than any two-edged sword. Idolaters will especially be contended with in the day of wrath, v. 17. Perhaps some of those who returned out of Babylon, retained such instances of idolatry and superstition as are here mentioned; had their idols by the way of Israel, and craving to set it up publicly in the high places, and therefore purified themselves, as the worshippers of the true God used to do, when they went about their idolatrous rites, one after another, or, as we read it, behind one tree in the midst; behind Ahab, or Ehud, some idol that they worshipped by that name; and in honour of which they ate swine's flesh, which was expressly forbidden by the law of God; and other abominations, as the mouse, or some other like animal. But it may refer to all those judgments which the wrath of God, according to the word of God, will bring upon provoking sinners, that live in contempt of God, and are devoted to the world and the flesh—they shall be consumed together. From the happiness of heaven we find expressly excluded all idolaters, and whosoever worketh abomination, Rev. xxi. 27. xxii. 15. In the day of vengeance and hatred, wickedness will be brought to light, and brought to the account; for, (v. 18.) I know their works, and their thoughts; God knows both what men do, and from what principle, and with what design they do it; and therefore is fit to judge the world, because he can judge the secrets of men, Rom. ii. 16. He will appear to the comfort and joy of all that are faithful to him in the setting up of his kingdom in this world, the kingdom of grace, the earnest and first-fruits of the kingdom of glory. The time shall come that he will gather all nations and tongues to himself, that they might come and see his glory as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, v. 18. This was fulfilled when all nations were to be disciplined, and the gift of tongues bestowed in order thereto. The church had had him in the setting up of his kingdom, and in one tongue only God was worshipped: but in the days of Messiah the partition-wall shall be taken down, and those that had been strangers to God shall be brought acquainted with him, and shall see his glory in the gospel, as the Jews had seen it in the sanctuary. As to this, it is here promised.

II. That some of the Jewish nation should, by the grace of God, be distinguished from the rest, and marked for salvation: I will not only set up a gathering ensign among them, to which the Gentiles shall
seek, (as is promised, ch. xi. 12.) but there shall be those among them whom I will set a different aspect of those characters and signs.

Though they are a corrupt, degenerate nation, yet God will set apart a remnant of them, that shall be devoted to him, and employed for him, and a mark shall be set upon them, with such certainty will God own them, Ezek. ix. 4. The servants of God shall be sealed in their foreheads, Rev. vii. 3. The Lord knows them that are his; Christ's sheep are marked. The apostles were distinguished thus by the grace of God, shall be commissioned to invite others to come and take the benefit of that grace; those that escape the power of those prejudices by which the generality of that nation is kept in unbelief, they shall be sent unto the nations, to carry the gospel among them, and preach it to every creature. Note: Those who themselves have escaped the wrath to come, should do all they can to snatch others also as brands out of the burning. God chooses to send those on his errands that can deliver their message feelingly and experimentally, and warn people of their danger by sin, as those who have themselves narrowly escaped the danger. (1.)

They shall be sent unto the nations, divers of which are here named; Tarshish, and Gomer, and all the islands (Gen. x. 26.) they are interpreters agreed, that the couriers are here intended; Tarshish signifies in general the sea, yet some take it for Tarsus in Cilicia; Pul is mentioned sometimes as the name of one of the kings of Assyria, perhaps some part of that country might likewise bear that name; Lud is supposed to be Lydia, a warlike nation, famed for archers; the Lydians are said to handle and ship the cuerns, Jer. xxvi. 9. Tabur, some think, is Italy or Spain; and Javan most agree to be Greece, the Ionians; and the Isles of the Gentiles, that were peoples by the postscript of Japhet, (Gen. x. 5.) probably, are here meant by the isles afar off, that have not heard my name, neither have seen my glory. 

In Judah only God was known, and there only his name was great for many ages; other countries sat in darkness, heard not the joyful sound, saw not the joyful light. This deplorable state of theirs seems to be spoken of here with compassion; for it is pity that any of the children of men should be at such a distance from their Maker as not to hear his name and see his glory. In consideration of this, (2.) Those that are sent to the nations shall go upon God's errand, to declare his glory among the nations; but they shall be thus employed among the nations shall declare the glory of God's providence concerning their nation all along, by which many shall be invited to join with them, as also by the appearances of God's glory among them in his ordinances; some out of all languages of the nations shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, entreat him to take notice of them, to admit them into his kingdom, and to stay a little while for them, till they are ready, for we will go with you, having heard that God is with you, Zech. viii. 23. Thus the glory of God was in part declared among the Gentiles; but more clearly and fully by the apostles and preachers of the gospel, who were sent into all the world, even to the isles afar off, to publish the glorious gospel of the blessed God. They went fast and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, Mark xvi. 20.

3. That many converts shall hereby be made, v. 20. They shall bring all your brethren (for proselytes ought to be owned and embraced as brethren) for an offering unto the Lord. God's glory shall not be in vain declared to them, but by it they shall be educated to the practice of the true and living religion, to be the Lord's. They that are sent to them shall succeed so well in their negotiation, that thereupon there shall be as great a flocking to Jerusalem, as used to be at the time of a solemn feast, when all the males from all parts of the country were to attend there, and there to partake of the sacrifices. Observe, (1.) The young men of the Gentiles shall be prepared, and are appointed to be employed among them, as interpreters, to lead them to the Lord. They shall escape the wrath to come, and shall never be lost. (2.) The Gentiles shall come in crowds, and in great numbers, and in all parts of the world, to Jerusalem, as a type of the glory of Christ, and of the conversion of the Gentiles, which shall be in the last days, when Christ shall be the Prince of the Gentiles also. (3.) The Gentiles shall be employed by the Lord himself, in this great business, and shall be fitted for it by his grace, and shall be directed by his Spirit. (4.) The Gentiles shall be brought in great numbers, as much as the Lord himself shall use to direct them, for the increase of his church, and the spreading of the gospel.
That the public worship of God in religious assemblies shall be carefully and constantly attended upon by all that are thus brought as an offering to the Lord, v. 23. This is described in expressions suited to the Old Testament dispensation, to show that though the ceremonial law should be abolished, and the temple-services should come to an end, yet God should be still as regularly, constantly, and acceptably worshipped as ever. Herefore Jews only went up to appear before God, and they were bound to attend only three times a year, and the males only; but now all flesh, Gentiles as well as Jews, women as well as men, shall come and worship before God in his presence, though not in his temple at Jerusalem, but in religious assemblies dispersed all the world over, which shall be to them as the tabernacle of meeting was to the Jews. God will in them through his new covenant, which does not make covenants with his people, and would pitee of those corruptions which kept a prophet from having honour in his own country. God says, I will take, not all of them, though they are all in a spiritual sense made to our God kings and priests, but of them, some of them. It is God's work originally to choose ministers by qualifying them for, and inclining them to, the service, as well as to provide that there should be a service. I will take them, I will admit them, though Gentiles, and will accept of them and their ministrations. This is a great honour and advantage to the Gentile church, as it was to the Jewish church, that God raised up of their sons for prophets, and their young men for Nazarites, Amos ii. 11.

5. That the church and ministry, being thus settled, shall continue and be kept up in a succession from one generation to another, v. 22. The change that will be made by the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah, is here described to be, (1.) A very great and universal change; it shall be a new world, the new heavens, and the new earth, promised before, ch. lxv. 17. Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new, (2 Cor. v. 17.) the old covenant of peculiarity is set aside, and a new covenant, a covenant of grace, established, Heb. viii. 13. We are now to serve in newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter, Rom. vii. 6. New commandments are given relating both to heaven and earth, and new promises relating to both, and both together make a New Testament; so that they are new heavens and new earth, that God will create, and these a preparative for the new heavens and earth to come, and the abiding inheritance of that day, Ps. civ. 3. (2.) A change of God's own making; he will create the new heavens and the new earth. The change was made by him that had authority to make new ordinances, as well as power to make new worlds. (3.) It will be an abiding, lasting change; a change never to be changed; a new world that will be always new, and never to grow old, that doth when it is once perfected, v. 16. It shall remain before me unalterable; for the gospel dispensation is to continue to the end of time, and not to be succeeded by any other. The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom that cannot be moved; the laws and privileges of it are things that cannot be shaken, but shall for ever remain, Heb. xii. 27, 28. It shall therefore remain, because it is before God; it is under his eye, and care, and special protection. (4.) It will be maintained in a seed that shall serve Christ; Your seed, and in them, your name, shall be established—a seed of ministers, a seed of Christians; as one generation of born passes away, another generation shall come, and thus the name of Christ with that of Christians, shall continue on earth while the earth remains, and his throne as the days of heaven. The gates of hell, though they fight against the church, shall not prevail, nor wear out the saints of the Most High.

10. That the public worship of God in religious assemblies shall be carefully and constantly attended upon by all that are thus brought as an offering to the Lord, v. 23. This is described in expressions suited to the Old Testament dispensation, to show that though the ceremonial law should be abolished, and the temple-services should come to an end, yet God should be still as regularly, constantly, and acceptably worshipped as ever. Herefore Jews only went up to appear before God, and they were bound to attend only three times a year, and the males only; but now all flesh, Gentiles as well as Jews, women as well as men, shall come and worship before God in his presence, though not in his temple at Jerusalem, but in religious assemblies dispersed all the world over, which shall be to them as the tabernacle of meeting was to the Jews. God will in them through his new covenant, which does not make covenants with his people, and would pitee of those corruptions which kept a prophet from having honour in his own country. God says, I will take, not all of them, though they are all in a spiritual sense made to our God kings and priests, but of them, some of them. It is God's work originally to choose ministers by qualifying them for, and inclining them to, the service, as well as to provide that there should be a service. I will take them, I will admit them, though Gentiles, and will accept of them and their ministrations. This is a great honour and advantage to the Gentile church, as it was to the Jewish church, that God raised up of their sons for prophets, and their young men for Nazarites, Amos ii. 11.

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against God, not only broken his laws, but broken covenant with him, and thought themselves able to contend with him. It may be meant especially of the unbelieving Jews that rejected the gospel of Christ. (2.) What their misery is; it is here represented by the frightful spectacle of a field of battle, covered with the carcases of the slain, that lie rotting above ground, full of worms crawling about them, and feeding on them; and if you go to burn them, they are so scattered, and it is such a noisome piece of work to get them together, that it would be endless, and the fire would never be quenched; so that they are an abhorring to all flesh, nobody cares to come near them. Now this is sometimes accomplished in temporal judgments, and perhaps never nearer the letter than in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans, in which destruction it is computed that above two millions, first and last, were cut off by the sword, beside what perished by famine and pestilence. It may refer likewise to the spiritual judgments that came upon the unbelieving Jews, which St. Paul looks upon, and shows us, Rom. xi. 8, &c. They became dead in sins, twice dead; the church of the Jews was a carcase of a church, all its members were putrid carcases, their worm died not, their own consciences made them continually uneasy; and the fire of their rage against the gospel was not quenched, which was their punishment as well as their sin; and they became, more than ever any nation under the sun, an abhorring to all flesh. But our Saviour applies it to the everlasting misery and torment of impenitent sinners in the future state, where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched; (Mark ix. 44.) for the soul, whose conscience is its constant tormentor, is immortal, and the God, whose wrath is its constant terror, is eternal. (3.) What notice shall be taken of it; they that worship God shall go forth, and look upon them, to affect their own hearts with the love of their Redeemer, when they see what misery they are redeemed from. As it will aggravate the miseries of the damned, to see others in the kingdom of heaven, and themselves thrust out, (Luke xiii. 28.) so it will illustrate the joys and glories of the blessed, to see what becomes of them that died in their transgression, and it will elevate their praises to think that they were themselves as brands plucked out of that burning. To the honour of that free grace which thus distinguished them, let the redeemed of the Lord with all humility, and not without a holy trembling, sing their triumphant songs.