AN

E X P O I T I O N,

WITH

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,

OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET

J E R E M I A H.

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

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

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

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

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

V. That he was a suffering prophet; he was persecuted by his own people more than any of them, as we shall find in the story of this book: for he lived and preached just before the Jews' destruction by the Chaldeans, when their character seems to have been the same as it was just before their destruction by the Romans, when they killed the Lord Jesus, and persecuted his disciples, pleased not God, and were contrary to all men, for wrath was come upon them to the uttermost, 1 Thess. ii. 13, 16. The last account we have of him, in his history, is, that the remaining Jews forced him to go down with them into Egypt; whereas the current tradition is, among Jews and Christians, that he suffered martyrdom. Hettlinger, out of Elmaakin, an Arabic historian, relates, that he, continuing to prophesy in Egypt against the Egyptians and other nations, was stoned to death; and that long after, when Alexander entered Egypt, he took up the bones of Jeremiah where they were buried in obscurity, and carried them to Alexandria, and buried them there. The prophecies of this book, which we have in the nineteen first chapters, seem to be the heads of the sermons he preached in a way of general reproof for sin, and denunciation of judgment; afterward they are more particular and occasional, and mixed with the history of his day, but not placed in the order of time. With the threatenings are intermixed many gracious promises of mercy to the penitent, of the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity, and some that have a plain reference to the kingdom of the Messiah. Among the Apocryphal writings, an epistle is extant, said to be written by Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon, warning them against the worship of idols, by exposing the vanity of them, and the folly of idolaters. It is in Baruch, ch. vi. But it is supposed not to be authentic; nor has it, I think, any thing like the life and spirit of Jeremiah's writings. It is also related concerning Jeremiah, (2 Mac. ii. 4.) that when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans, he, by direction from God, took the ark and altar of incense, and carrying them to mount Nebi, lodged them in a hollow cave there, and stopped the door; but some that followed him, and thought that they had marked the place, could not find it: he blamed them for seeking it, telling them that the place should be unknown till the time that God should gather his people together again. But I know not what credit is to be given to that story, though it is there said to be found in the records. We cannot but be concerned, in the reading of Jeremiah's prophecies, to find that they were so little regarded by the men of that generation; but let us make use of that as a reason why we should regard them the more; for they are written for our learning too, and for warning to us and to our land.
CHAP. I.

In this chapter we have, 1. The general inscription or title of this book, with the time and circumstances of Jeremiah's public ministry, v. 1…3.

2. The call of Jeremiah to the prophetic office, his modest objection against it, and an ample commission given him for the execution of his mission, v. 4…10.

3. The vision of the vineyard, and a seething-pot, signifying the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, v. 11…16.

4. Encouragement given to the prophet to go on undaunted in his work, for the assurance of God's presence with him, v. 17…19. Thus he set to work by one that will be sure to bear him out.

1. The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin:

To whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

3. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

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

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

2. We have the general date of his prophecies; the knowledge of which is requisite to the understandings of the text. (1.) He began to prophesy in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, v. 2. Josiah, in the twelfth year of his reign, began a work of reformation, applied himself with all sincerity to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the images, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3. And very seasonably then was this young prophet raised up to assist and encourage the young king in the work of reforming the kingdom, which the Lord had committed to him; not only a charge and commission to him to prophesy, but a revelation of the things themselves which he was to deliver. As it is an encouragement to ministers to be confirmed and protected by such pious magistrates as Josiah was, so it is a great help to magistrates, in any good work of reformation, to be advised and animated, and to have a principal part in the work themselves, by the assistance of faithful, zealous ministers as Jeremiah was. Now, one would have expected when these two joined forces, such a prince, and such a prophet, (as in a like case, Ezra v. 1, 2,) and both young, such a complete reformation would have been brought about and settled, as would have prevented the ruin of the church and state; but it proved quite otherwise. In the eighteenth year of Josiah we find there was not a great many of the relics of idolatry, that were not purged out: for what can the best princes and prophets do to prevent the ruin of a people that hate to be reformed? And therefore, though it was a time of reformation, Jeremiah continued to foretell the destroying judgments that were coming upon them; for there is no symptom more threatening to any people than fruitless attempts of reformation. Josiah and Jeremiah would have healed them, but they would not be healed. (2.) Jeremiah prophesied by the prophesying through the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, who reigned eleven years apiece; he prophesied to the carrying away of Jerusalem captive, (v. 3.) that great event which he had so often prophesied of. He continued to prophesy after that, ch. xl. 1. But the computation here is made to end with that, because it was the accomplishment of many of the predictions then made. The prophecy of Josiah to the captivity was just forty years. Dr. Lightfoot observes, that as Moses was so long with the people, a teacher in the wilderness, till they entered into their own land; Jeremiah was so long with their own land a teacher, before they went into the wilderness of the heathen; and he thinks that therefore a special mark is set upon the last forty years of the iniquity of Judah, which Ezekiel foretold forty days before the fall. If, for a year and a day, at that time, they had Jeremiah prophesying among them, which was a great aggravation of their impenitency, God, in this prophet, suffered their manners, their ill manners, forty years, and at length swears in his wrath that they should not continue in his rest.

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

Here is,

1. Jeremiah's early designation to the work and office of a prophet, which God gives him notice of as a reason for his early application to that business; (v. 4, 5.) The word of the Lord came to him, with a satisfying assurance to himself that it was the word of the Lord, and not a delusion; and God told him, 1. That he had ordained him a prophet to the nations, or, against the nations, that is, the nations more especially those which are the Lord's anger, who are therefore now reckoned among the nations, because they had learned their works, and mingled themselves with them in their idolatries, which otherwise they should not have been, Num. xxviii. 9. Yet he was given to be a prophet, not to Jews only, but to the neighbouring nations; to whom he was to send scribes, (ch. xxviii. 5,) and whom he must make to drink of the cup of the Lord's anger, ch. xxv. 17. He is still in his writings a prophet to the nations (to every nation...
among the rest, to tell them what the national judgments are which may be expected for national sins. It would be well for the nations, would they take Jeremiah for their prophet, and attend to the warnings he gives them. That, before he was born, even in his eternal counsel, he had designed him to be so. Let him know, that He who gave him his commission, is the same that gave him his young, that formed him in the belly, and brought him forth in his times, and that the same hand that was his rightful Owner, and might employ him, and make use of him, as he pleased; and that this commission was given him in pursuance of the purpose God had purposed in himself concerning him, before he was born; "I knew thee, and I sanctified thee, that thou shouldst be a prophet to the nations. '"

The St. Paul of himself, that God had appointed him from his mother's womb, to be a Christian, and an apostle, Gal. c. 15. Observe, (1.) The great Creator knows what use to make of every man before he makes him; he has made all for himself, and of the same lumber of clay designs a vessel of honour or dishonour, as he pleases, Rom. ix. 21. (2.) What God has designed men for, he will call them to for his purposes cannot but be frustrated. Known unto God are all his own works beforehand, and his knowledge is infallible and his purpose unchangeable. (3.) There is a particular purpose and providence of God conversant about his prophets and ministers; they are by special counsel designed for their work, and what they are designed for they are fitted for; I that know thee, sanctified thee. God destines them to it, and forms them for it, then when he first forms the spirit of man within him; Propheta nascitur, non fit.—A man is not educated unto a prophet, but originally formed for the office.

II. His modest declining of this honourable employment, v. 6. Though God had predestinated him to it, yet it was news to him, and a mighty surprise to hear that he should be a prophet to the nations. We know not what God intends for us, but He knows. One would have thought he should have caught at it as a piece of preferment, for so it was; but he objects against it, disabels himself; "Ah, Lord God, behold, I cannot speak to great men and multitudes, as prophets must; I cannot speak freely or fluently; cannot word things well, as a message from God should be wording; I cannot speak with any authority, nor can I expect to be heeded, for I am a child, and my youth will be despised."

Note, It becomes us when we have any service to do for God, to be afraid lest we misuse it, and lest it suffer, through our weakness and unfitness for it; it becomes us likewise to have low thoughts of ourselves, and to be deficient of our own sufficiency. Those that are young should consider that they are so should be afraid let that hinder thee from obeying it. Go to all to whom I shall send thee, and speak whatsoever I command thee."

Note, Though a sense of our own weakness and insufficiency should make us go humbly about our work, yet it should not make us draw back from it when God calls us to it. God was angry with Moses even for his moitest excuses, Exod. iv. 14. (2.) Thou hast no excuse; take courage. It is not God that makes thee, but the work he designs for thee to do. Be not afraid of that which thou hast been designed to do. Though thou art a child, thou shalt be enabled to go to all to whom I shall send thee, though they were ever so great, and ever so many. And whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt have judgment, memory, and language, wherewith to speak it, as it should be spoken."

Samuel delivered a message from God to Eli, when he was a little child. Note, God can, when he pleases, make children prophets, and ordain strength out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.

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

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

(1.) To speak intelligently, and as one that had acquaintance with God, v. 9. He having now a vision of the divine glory, the Lord just forth his hand, and by a sensible sign conferred upon him so much of the gift of the tongue as was necessary for him; he touched his mouth, and with that touch opened his lips, that his mouth should show forth God's praise; and with that touch sweetly conveyed his words into his mouth, to be ready to him upon all such occasions; so that he could never want words which was thus furnished by Him that made man's mouth.

God not only put knowledge into his head, but words into his mouth; for there are words which the Holy Ghost teacheth all men. God's message should be delivered in his own words, that it may be delivered punctually; (Ezek. iii. 4.) Speak with my words. And those that faithfully do so shall not want instructions as the case requires; God will give them a mouth and wisdom in that same hour, Matt. x. 19.

(2.) To speak powerfully, and as one that had authority from God, v. 16. It is a strange commission that is here given him; See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms; which sounds very great, and yet Jeremiah is a poor, despisable priest still; he is not set over the kingdoms as a prince, to rule them by the sword, but as a prophet, by the power of the word of God. These that would from hence prove the Pope's supremacy over kings, and Core ii. 13. It is a great God's message should be delivered in his own words, that it must prove that he has the same extraordinary Spirit of prophecy that Jeremiah had, else how can he have the power that Jeremiah had by virtue of that Spirit? And yet the power that Jeremiah had, who, notwithstanding his power, lived in meanness and contempt, and under oppression, would not content himself with those proofs. In the persons of one nation, the Jewish nation in the first place, and other nations, some great ones besides, against whom he prophesied; was set over them, not to demand tri-
bute from them, or to enrich himself with their spoils, but to _root out, and pull down, and destroy, and yet withhold that which is evil removed._ [1.] He must attempt to reform the nations, to _root out, and pull down, and destroy idolatry and other wickedness_ among them, to extirpate those vicious habits and customs which had long taken root, to _throw down the kingdom of sin, that religion and virtue might be planted and built_ among them. And to the introducing and establishing of that which is good, it is necessary that he do this, which is evil be removed. [2.] He must tell them that it would be well or ill with them, according as they were, or were not, reformed. He must set before them _life and death, good or evil,_ according to God's declaration of the method he takes with kingdoms and nations, ch. xviii. 7, 10. He must assure those who persisted in their wickedness, that they should be _rooted and destroyed,_ and those who repented, that they should be _built and planted._ He was authorized to read the doom of nations, and God would _ratify it, and fulfill it._ (Isa. xlv. 26.) He would do it according to his word, and therefore is said to do it by his word. It is thus expressed, partly to show how sure the word of prophecy is—it will as certainly be accomplished as if it were done already; and partly to put a hag upon the prophetic office, and make it look truly great, that others may not despise prophets, nor they disparage themselves. And yet more honourable does the gospel-ministry look, in that declarative power Christ gave his apostles, to _remit and retain sin._ (John xx. 23.) _To bind and loose._ Matth. xviii. 18.

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

Here,

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

2. He intimates to him that the people were ripening apace for ruin, and that ruin was hastening apace toward them. God, having answered his objection, that he was a child, goes on to initiate him in the prophetical learning and language; and, having promised to enable him to speak intelligibly to the people, he here teaches him to understand what God says to him; for prophets must have eyes in their heads as well as tongues, must be seers as well as speakers; he therefore asks him, _"Jeremiah, what seest thou? Look about thee, and ob serve now."_ And he was soon aware of what was presented to him; _I see a rod, denoting affliction and chastisement; a correcting rod hanging over us; and it is a rod of an almond-tree, which is one of the forwardest trees in the spring, is in the bud and blossoming likewise, when it is broken out; it flourisheth, says Pliny, in the month of January, and by March has ripe fruits; hence it is called in the Hebrew, Shakedh, the hasty tree, whether this rod that Jeremiah saw had already budded, as some think, or whether it was strippet and dry, as others think, and yet Jeremiah knew it to be of an almond-tree, as Aaron's rod was, is unanswerable and inexplicable._

3. _Thou hast seen._ God commended him that he was so observant, and so quick of apprehension, as to be aware, though it was the first vision he ever saw, that it was a _rod of an almond-tree;_ that his mind was so composed as to be able to distinguish. Prophets have need of good eyes; and those that see well shall be commended, and not those only that speak well. _Thou hast seen a hasty tree, which signifies that I will hasten my word to perform it._ Jeremiah shall prophesy that which he himself shall live to see accomplished. We have the explication of this, Ezek. vii. 10, 11. _"The rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded, violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness._

4. _The measure of Jerusalem's iniquity fills very fast; and as if their destruction shubbered too long, they break it, they hasten it, and I will hasten to perform what I have spoken against them._

2. He intimates to him whence the intended ruin should arise; Jeremiah is a second time asked, _What seest thou?_ He sees a seething-pot upon the fire, (v. 13.) representing Jerusalem and Judah in great commotion, like boiling water, by reason of the descent which the Chaldean army made upon them; and he sees in this pot boiling the old sin, wasting away as boiling water does, and sensibly evaporating and growing less and less; ready to boil over, to be thrown out of their own city and land, as out of the pan into the fire, from bad to worse. Some think that those scoffers referred to this, who said, _"The city is the caldron, and we be the flesh._ Now the mouth or face of the pot turned toward the north; for hence the fire and fuel were to come, that must make the pot boil thus. So the vision is explained, v. 14. _Out of the north an evil shall break forth, or shall be opened._ It had been long designed by the justice of God, and long deserved by the sin of the people, and yet hitherto the divine patience had restrained it, and held it in, as it were;
the enemies had intended it, and God had checked them; but now all restraints shall be taken off, and the evil shall break forth; the direful scene shall open, and the enemy shall come in like a flood. It shall be a universal calamity, it shall come upon all the inhabitants of the land, from the highest to the lowest, for they have all corrupted their way. Lord, for their wickedness, Lord for their wickedness, do thou arise, and rule over them, Job xxxviii. 22. When there was friendship between Hezekiah and the king of Babylon, they promised themselves many advantages out of the north; but it proved quite otherwise, out of the north their trouble arose. Thence sometimes the fiercest tempests come, whence we expect fair weather, and if the monster observe, (1.) The raising of the army that shall invade Judah, and lay it waste; I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord. All the northern crowns shall unite under Nebuchadnezzar, and join with him in this expedition. They lay dispersed, but God, who has all men's hearts in his hand, will bring them together; they lie at a distance from Judah, but God, who directs all men's steps, will call them, and they shall come, though they be ever so far off. God's summons shall be obeyed; they whom he calls shall come. When he work to do of any kind, he will find instruments to do it, though he send to the utmost parts of the earth for them. And that the armies brought into the field may be sufficiently numerous and strong, he will fill the cities of those kingdoms into the service; not one able-bodied man shall be left behind. (2.) The advance of this army; the commanders of the troops of the several nations shall take their post in carrying on the siege of Jerusalem, and the other cities of Judah. They shall set every one his throne, or seat. When a city is besieged, we say, The enemy is down before it; they shall encamp some at the entering of the gates, others against the walls round about, to cut off both the going out of the months, and the coming in of the meat, and so to starve them.

3. He tells him plainly what was the procuring cause of all these judgments; it was the sin of Jerusalem, and of the cities of Judah. (v. 15.) I will take away the corn of the land, and give judgment against them, this sentence, this judgment, because of all their wickedness; that is it that plucks up the flood-gates, and lets in this inundation of calamities. They have forsaken God, and revolted from their allegiance to him, and have burnt incense to other gods, new gods, strange gods, and all false gods, pretenders, usurpers, the creatures of their own fancy, and they have worshiped the works of their own hands. Jeremiah was young, had looked but little abroad into the world, and perhaps did not know, nor could have believed, what abominable idolatries the children of his people were guilty of; but God tells him, that he might know what to level his reproofs against, and what to ground his threatenings upon, and that he might himself be satisfied in the equity of the slaughter which in God's name he was to pass upon them.

4. God excites and encourages Jeremiah to apply himself with all diligence and seriousness to his business. A great trust is committed to him; he is sent, in God's name, as a herald at arms, to proclaim war against his rebellious subjects; for God is plenteous to give warning of his judgments beforehand, that sinners may be awakened to meet him out of the midst of their sin, and that, if they do not, they may be left inexusable. With this trust Jeremiah has a charge given him; (v. 17.) "Thou therefore, gird up thy loins; free thyself from all those things that would unfit thee for, or hinder thee in, this service; buckle to it with readiness and resolution; and be not entangled with doubts about it." He must be quick—Arise, and lose no time; he must be busy—Arise, and speak unto them in season, out of season; he must be bold—Be not dismayed at their faces, as before, v. 8. He must be faithful; it is required of ambassadors that they know.

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

And two things are here given him which he should do thus. (1.) Because he had reason to fear the wrath of God, if he should be false; "Be not dismayed at their faces, so as to desert thine office, or shrink from the duty of it, lest I confound and dismay thee before them; lest I give thee up to thy faint-heartedness." Those that consult their own credit, ease, and safety, more than their work and duty, are justly left to God for themselves, and borne upon themselves the shame of their own cowardliness. Nay, lest I reckon with thee for thy faint-heartedness, and break thee to pieces; some read it. Therefore this prophet says, ch. xlvii. 17, Lord, Be not thou a terror to me. Note, The fear of God is the best antidote against the fear of man. Let us always be afraid of offending God, who after he has killed his power to cast into hell, and then shall be able to destroy that soul that can but kill the body, Luke xii. 4, 5. See Neh. iv. 14. It is better to have all the men in the world our enemies than God our Enemy. (2.) Because he had no reason to fear the wrath of man if he were faithful; for the God whom he served, would protect him, and bear him out, so that they should neither sink his spirits, nor drive him off from his work, should neither stop his mouth, nor take away his life, till he had finished his testimony, v. 18. This young stripling of a prophet is made by the power of God, as an impenetrable city, fortified with iron pillars and surrounded with walls of brass; he sallies out upon them in reproves and threatenings, and keeps them in awe. They set upon him on every side; the kings and princes better him with their power, his priests thunder against him with their church-censures, and the people of the land shoot their arrows at him, even slanderous and bitter words; but he shall keep his ground, and make his part good with them; he shall still be a curb upon them; (v. 19.) They shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail to destroy thee, for I am with thee to deliver thee out of their hands; nor shall they prevail to defeat the word that God sends them by Jeremiah, nor to deliver themselves, it shall take hold of them, for God is against them to destroy them. Note, Those who are sure that they have God with them, (as he is if they be with him,)
CHAP. II.

It is probable that this chapter was Jeremiah's first sermon after his ordination, and a most lively, pathetic scene. He spoke in the name of God, as we have it in all the books of the prophets.

Let him not say, I cannot speak; for I am a child; for God, having touched his mouth, and put his words into his mouth, and made him a prophet, will give him the language and the words, and the argument, and the very speech. They were the Lord's people; their transgressions, even the house of Jacob their sins; it is all by way of reproof and conviction, that they might be brought to repent of their sins, and so prevent the ruin that was coming upon them. They that stand up against them is very high, the aggravations black, the arguments used for their conviction very close and pressing; and the expostulations very pungent and affecting. And if they are not made ashamed by this, it is idolatry, forsaking the true God, their own God, for other false gods. Now they are told, I. That this was ungrateful to God, who had been so kind to them, v. 18. II. That it was without precedent, that a nation should change their god, v. 9. 13. III. That hereby they had disparaged and ruined themselves, v. 14. 19. IV. That they had broken their covenants, and degenerated from their good beginnings, v. 20. 24. V. That their wickedness was too plain to be concealed, and too bad to be excused, v. 22, 23. 25. VI. That they persisted willfully and obstinately in it, and were irreclaimable and unf competent in their idolatries, v. 24. 25. 33. 36. VII. That they shamed themselves before God by their idolatry, and should shortly be made ashamed of it when they should find their idols unable to help them, v. 26. 29. 37. VIII. That they had no ground of complaint, or excuse, in the rebukes of Providence they had received from the hands of God, v. 38. IX. That they had put a great contempt upon God, v. 31. 32. X. That with their idolatries they had mixed the most unnatural murders, shedding the blood of the poor and the helpless, v. 31. 32. Those hearts were hard indeed, that were untouched and unhumbled when their sins were thus set in order before them. O that by meditating on this chapter we might be brought to repent of our spiritual idolatries, giving that place in our souls to the world and the flesh, which should have been reserved for God only!

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

Here is,

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

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

1. God here puts them in mind of the favours he had of old bestowed upon them, when they were first formed into a people; (v. 2.) "I remember for thy sake, and I would have thee to remember it, and improve the remembrance of it for good: Lord, I cannot forget the kindness of those days, and the love of things past." This may be understood,

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

In two things appeared the kindness of their youth. [1.] That they followed the direction of the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness; though sometimes they spake of revolt, and showed defilement toward Egypt, or pushing forward into Canaan, yet they did not return for forty years together went after the wilderness, and trusted him to provide for them, though it was a land that was not sown. This God took kindly, and took notice of it to their praise long after, that though much was amiss
among them, yet they never forsook the direction they were under. Thus, though Christ often chid his disciples, yet he commended them, at parting, for walking along with his Lamb, Luke x. 28. It must be remembered, the strong affection of the youth, and the disposals, that will carry us on to follow God in a wilderness, with an implicit faith, and an entire resignation; and it is a pity that those who have so followed him, should ever leave him. [2.] That they entertained divine institutions, set up the tabernacle among them, and attended the service of it. Israel was taken from the Gentiles, as it were, to be a lamp to the nations; so the Jews were taken from him in covenant as a peculiar people. Thus they began in the Spirit, and God puts them in mind of it, that they might be ashamed of living in the flesh. Or, it may be understood, (2.) Of God's kindness to them; of that he afterwards speaks largely: When Israel was a child, then I loved him, Hos. xi. 1. He then espoused that people to himself with all the affection with which a young man marries a virgin, (ch. iii. 5.) for the time was a time of love, Ezek. xvi. 8.

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

[2.] Having espoused them, he espoused their cause, and became an Enemy to their enemies, Exod. xxiii. 22. Being the first-fruits of his increase, all that devoured him, (so it should be read,) did offend; they trespassed, they contracted guilt, and evil befell them; as those were reckoned offenders, that devoured the first-fruits, or any thing else that was holy to the Lord, that embrazed them, or converted them to their own use, Lev. v. 15. Whoever offered any injury to the people of God, did it at their peril; their God was ready to avenge their quarrel, and said to the prince of kings, Touch not mine anointed, Ps. cxiv. 15. Exod. xviii. 4. God's throne is upon the sea, he will fight with those that attempted to debauch them, and drew them off from being holiness to the Lord; witness his quarrel with the Midianites about the matter of Peor, Numb. xxv. 17, 18.

[3.] He brought them out of Egypt with a high hand and great terror, (Deut. iv. 34.) and yet with a kind hand and great tenderness led them through a vast howling wilderness, (v. 6.) through the deserts and high and holy places of the earth, through that fruitful land, where there was ground, not to feed them, but to bury them; where there was no good to be expected, for it was a land of drought, and all manner of evil to be feared, for it was the shadow of death; in that darksome valley they walked forty years; but God was with them, his rod, in Moses's hand, and his staff, in his hand; and so were the people; and as a guide for them, (Ps. xxiii. 4, 5.) gave them bread out of the clouds, and drink out of the rocks. It was a land abandoned by all mankind, as yielding neither road nor rest; it was no thoroughfare, for no man passed through it; no settlement, for no man dwelt there; for God will teach his people to tread unredun paths, to dwell alone, and to be singular. The difficulties of the journey are thus intimated, to magnify the power and goodness of God in bringing them, through all, safe to their journey's end at last. All God's spiritual Israel must own their obligations to him for a safe guide through the wilderness of the world, no less dangerous to the soul than that was to the body.

[4.] At length he settled them in Canaan; (v. 7.) I brought you into a plentiful country; which would be the more acceptable after they had been for so many years in a land of drought. They did eat the fruit thereof, and the goodness thereof, and were allowed so to do. I brought you into a land of Carthage; and thence you can now come to the first-fruits of the ordinary fruitfulness; Canaan was as the great fruitful field, Deut. viii. 7.

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

2 He upbraids them with their horrid ingratitude, and the ill returns they had made him for these favours; let them all come, and answer to this charge; (v. 4.) it is exhibited in the name of God against all the families of the house of Israel, for they have done that which they could not have done if God had been in their midst; they have been a place of extraordinary fruitfulness; Canaan was as the great fruitful field, Deut. viii. 7.

(1.) He challenges them to produce any instance of his being unjust and unkind to them. Though he had conferred favours upon them in some things, yet, if in other things he had dealt hardly with them, they had not been altogether without excuse. He therefore puts it fairly to them to show cause for their deserting him; (v. 5.) What iniquity have your fathers found in me, or you either? Have you, upon trial, found God a hard Master? Have his commands put any hardship upon you, or obliged you to any thing unright, unfair, or unbecoming you? Have his promises put any cares upon you, or raised your expectations of things which you were afterward disappointed of? You that renounce your covenant with God, can you say that it was a hard bargain, and that which you could not live upon? You that forsake the ordinances of God, can you say that it was because they were a wearisome service, or work that there was nothing to be got by? No, the disappointments you have met with, were owing to yourselves, not to God. The yoke of his commandments is easy, and in keeping of them there is great reward. Note, Those that forsake God's commands are the most guilty of any provocation to do so; for this we may safely appeal to the consciences of sinners; the slothful servant that offered such a plea as this, had it overruled out of his own mouth, Luke xix. 22. Though he afflicts us, we cannot say that there is iniquity in him, he doth us no wrong; the ways of the Lord are undoubtedly equal, all the iniquity is in our ways. (2.) He charges them with being very unjust and unkind to him. [1.] They had quitted his service; "They are gone from me, nay, they are gone far from me." They studied how to estrange themselves from God and their duty, and got as far as they could out of the reach of his commandments and their own convictions. Those that have deserted religion, commonly set themselves at a greater distance from it, in a greater opposition to it, than those that never knew it.

[2.] They had quitted it for the service of idols, which was so much the greater reproach to God and his service; they went from him, not to mend themselves, but to cheat themselves; they have walked after vanity, that is, idlery; for an idol is a vain thing; it is nothing in the world, 1 Cor. viii. 4. Deut. xxxii. 21. Jer. xiv. 22. "Idolatrous wor
ships are vanities. Acts xiv. 15. Idolaters are vain, for they that make idols are like unto them, (Ps. cxxv. 8.) as much stocks and stones as the images they worship, and good for as little.

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

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

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

The prophet having shown their base ingratitude in forsaking God, here shows their unparalleled fickleness and folly: (v. 9.) I will yet plead with you. Note, Before God punishes sinners, he pleads with them, to bring them to repentance. Again, When much has been said of the evil of sin, still there is more to be said, when one article of the charge is made good, there is another to be urged; when we have said a great deal, still we have yet to speak on God’s behalf. Job xxxvi. 2. Those that deal with sinners, for their conviction, must urge a variety of arguments, and must make it appear, God had before pleaded with their fathers, and asked why they walked after vanity, and became vain, v. 5. Now he pleads with them, who persisted in that vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers, and with their children’s children, with all that in every age treads in their steps. Let these that forsake God know that he is willing to argue the case fairly with them, and by his mouth be justified when he speaks. He pleads that with us, which we should plead with ourselves.

1. He shows that they acted contrary to the usage of all nations; their neighbours were more firm and faithful to their false gods than they were to the true God. They were ambitious of being like the nations, and yet in this they were unlike them. He challenges them to produce an instance of any nation that had changed their gods, (v. 10, 11.) or were apt to change them. Let them survey either the old records, or the present state, of the isles of Chittim, Greece, and the European islands, the countries that were more polite and learned; and of Kedar, that lay south-east, (as the other north-west from them,) which were more rude and barbarous; and they should not find an instance of a nation that had changed their gods. Though they had never done them any kindness, nor could do, for they were no gods. Such a veneration had they for their gods, so good an opinion of them, and such a respect for the choice their fathers had made, that though they were gods of wood and stone, they would not change them for gods of silver and gold, no not for the living and true God. Shall we praise them for what they are? Let them be answered, to the reproach of Israel, that they who were the only people that had no cause to change their God, were yet the only people that had changed him.

Note, Men are with difficulty brought off that religion which they had been brought up in, though ever so absurd and grossly false. The zeal and constancy of idolaters should shame Christians out of the course of the world.

II. He shows that they acted contrary to the dictates of common sense, in that they not only changed, (it may sometimes be our duty and wisdom to do so,) but that they changed for the worse, and made a bad bargain for themselves. 1. They parted from a God who was their Glory; who made them truly glorious, and every way put honour upon them, one whom they might have a humble confidence in as theirs, who is himself a glorious God, and the glory of those whose God he is; he was particularly the glory of his people Israel, for his glory had often appeared on their tabernacle. 2. They closed with gods that could do them no good; gods that do not profit their worshippers.

Idolaters change God’s glory into shame, (Rom. i. 23.) and so do they their own; in dishonouring him, they dishonour themselves, and are enemies to their own interest. Note, Whatever they turn to who forsake God, it will never do them any good; it will flatter them and please them, but it cannot profit them.

Heaven itself is here called upon to stand amazed at the sin and folly of these apostates from God; (v. 12, 13.) Be astonished, O ye heavens, at their abominations. Idolaters change God’s glory into shame, (Rom. i. 23.) and so do they their own; in dishonouring him, they dishonour themselves, and are enemies to their own interest. Note, Whatever they turn to who forsake God, it will never do them any good; it will flatter them and please them, but it cannot profit them.
ions that were paid to them, were astonished and horribly afraid; and would rather have been very lukewarm, utterly exhausted, as the word is, and derived of their lightness, that it should give occasion to any to worship them. Some refer it to the angels of heaven; if they rejoice at the return of souls to God, we may suppose that they are astonished and horribly afraid at the revolt of souls from him. The meaning is, that the conduct of his people toward God was such as, (1.) We may well admire and wonder at, that ever men, who pretend to be of a higher order than that, should do so very absurdly, (2.) Such as we ought to have a holy indignation at as impious, and a high affront to our Maker, whose honour every good man is jealous for. (3.) Such as we may tremble to think of the consequences of; what will be in the end hereof. Be horribly afraid to think of the wrath and curse which will be the portion of those who thus throw themselves out of God's grace and favour. Now what is it that is to be thought of with all this horror? it is this: "My people, whom I have taught, and should have ruled, have committed two great evils, ingratitude and folly; they have acted contrary both to their duty and to their interest. [1.] They have affronted their God, by turning their back upon him, as if he were not worthy their notice; "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, the fountain of waters of salvation; they have an abundant and constant supply of all the comfort and relief they stand in need of, and they have it freely." God is their Fountain of life, Ps. xxxvi. 9. There is in him an all-sufficient grace and strength; all our springs are in him, and our streams from him; to forsake him is, in effect, to deny this; he has been to us a bountiful Benefactor, a Fountain of living waters, overflowing, ever-flowing, in the gifts of his favour; to forsake him is to refuse to acknowledge his kindness, and to withhold that tribute of love and praise, which his kindness calls for. [2.] They have cheated themselves; they forsook their own mercies, but it was for lying vanities; they took a great deal of pains to hew them out cisterns, to dig pits or pools in the earth or rock, which they would carry water to, or which should receive the rain; but they proved broken cisterns, also at the bottom, so that they could hold no water. When they came to quench their thirst there, they found nothing but mud and mire, and the filthy sediment of a standing lake. Such idols were to their worshippers, and such a change did they experience, who turned from God to them. If we make an idol of any creature, creature or pleasure, or honour, if we place our happiness in it, and promise ourselves the comfort and satisfaction in it which are to be had in God only, if we make it our joy and love, our hope and confidence, we shall find it a cistern, which we take a great deal of pains to hew out and fill, and at the best it will hold but a little water, and that dead and flat, and soon cor- rusted and decayed. If we make a cistern, or broken cisterns, that cracks and leaks in hot weather, so that the water is gone when we have most need of it, Job vi. 15. Let us therefore with purpose of heart cleave to the Lord only, for whither else shall we go? He has the words of eternal life.

14. Is Israel a servant? Is he a home-born slave? why is he spoiled? 15. The young lions roared upon him and yelped, and they made his land waste: his cities are burnt without inhabitant. 16. Also the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken the crown of thy head. 17. Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way? 18. And now, what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? Or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river? 19. Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know, therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts.

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

1. Their neighbours, who were their professed enemies, prevailed against them, and that was in consequence of their sin. 2. They were enslaved, and lost their liberty; (v. 14.) Is Israel a servant? No, Israel is my son, my first-born; (Exod. iv. 22.) they are children, they are heirs; nay, their extraction is noble, they are the seed of Abraham, God's friend, and of Jacob his chosen. Is he a home-born slave? No, he is not the son of the bond-woman, but of the free; they were designed for dominion, not for servitude. 3. Every thing in their constitution carried on it the marks of freedom and honour; who then is he spou- sed of his liberties? Who is he used as a servant, as a home-born slave? Why does he make himself a slave to his lusts, to his idols, to that which does not profit? v. 11. What a thing is this, that such a birth-right should be sold for a mass of money! Such a crown profaned, and laid in the dust! Why is he made a slave to the oppressor? God provided that a Hebrew servant should be free the seventh year, and that their slaves should be of the heathen, not of their brethren, Lev. xxv. 44, 46. But, not withstanding this, the princes made slaves of their subjects, and masters of their servants, (eb. xxxiv. 11.) and so made their country mean and miserable, which God had made happy and honourable. The neighbouring princes and powers broke in upon them, and made some of them slaves, driven into their own country, and perhaps sold others for slaves into foreign countries. And how came they thus to lose their liberties? For their iniquities they sold themselves, Isa. l. 1. We may apply this spiritually; Is the soul of man a servant? Is it a home-born slave? No, it is not; why then is it spoiled? It is because it has sold its own liberty, and enslaved itself to divers lusts, and pleasures, which is a lamentation, and should be for a lamentation.

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

3. They were abused, and insulted over, and beaten by everybody; (v. 16.) "Even the children of Noph and Tahapanes, despicable people, not
famed for military courage or strength, have broken the crown of thy head; or fed upon it. In all their struggles with thee they have been too hard for thee, and thou hast always come off with a broken head. The principal part of thy country, that which lay next Jerusalem, has been, and is, as a prey to thine enemies; this is the condition of Judah had been of late, in the reign of Manasseh, we find, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11. and perhaps it had not now much recovered itself.

4. All this was owing to their sin; (v. 17.) 

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

II. Their neighbours, that were their pretended friends, deceived them, distressed them, and helped them not; and God thus saith, (v. 18.) 

They did in vain seek to Egypt and Assyria for help; (v. 18.); What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt? When thou art under apprehensions of danger, thou art running to Egypt for help, Isa. xxx. 1, 2.—xxxli. 1. Thou art for drinking the waters of Sihor, that is, Nitis. xix. 11. Reifest upon their multitude, and refreshest thyself with the fair promises they make thee; at other times thou art seeking after, or going with all speed to fetch recruits thence, and thinkest to satisfy thyself with the waters of the river Euphrates; but what hast thou to do there? What wilt thou get by applying thyself to them? They shall help in vain, shall he broken reeds to thee, and what thou thoughtest would be to thee as a river, will be but a broken cistern."

2. This also was because of their sin; the judgment shall unavoidably come upon them which their sin has deserved; and then to what purpose is it to call in for help against it? (v. 19.) 

Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and then it is impossible for them to save thee; known and see therefore, upon the whole matter, that it is an evil thing that thou hast forsaken God, for that is, that now thou art enemies' enemies indeed, and thy friends' friends in vain. Observe here, (1.) The nature of sin; it is forsaking the Lord as our God; it is the soul's alienation from him, and aversion to him. Cheating to sin is leaving God. (2.) The cause of sin; it is because his fear is not in us. It is for want of a good principle in us, particularly for want of that fear which is the very bond of thy duty to God, because they stand in no awe of him, nor have any dread of his displeasure. (3.) The malignity of sin; it is an evil thing and a bitter. Sin is an evil thing, an evil that has no good in it, an evil that is the root and cause of all other evil; it is evil in-
JEREMIAH, II.

32.

al Mary, that great provocation which they were so notoriously guilty of. 1. They frequented the places of idol-worship; (v. 20.) upon every high hill, and under evergreen trees. They placed their groves, such as the heathen had a foolish fondness and veneration for; thou wouldest first to one and then to another, like one unsettled, and still uneasy and unsatisfied; but, in all, playing the harlot, worshipping false gods, which is spiritual whoredom, and was commonly accompanied with corporal idol-worship; it is the former, and the latter God, wander endlessly, and a vagrant lust is inveterate. 2. They made images for themselves, and gave divine honour to them; (v. 26, 27.) not only the common people, but even the kings and princes, who should have restrained the people from doing ill, and the priests and prophets, who should have taught them to do well, were themselves so wretchedly stotid and stupid, and under the power of such a strong delusion, as to say to a stock, "Thou art my father, thou art my god, the author of my being, to whom I owe duty, and on whom I have a dependence;" saying to a stone, to an idol made of stone, "Thou hast begotten me, or brought me forth; therefore protect me, provide for me, and bring me up." What greater affront could men put upon God who is our father, than to call him in this manner, and disowning of their obligations to him. What greater affront could men put upon themselves and their own reason, than to acknowledge that which is in itself absurd and impossible, and by making stocks and stones their parents, to make themselves no better than stocks and stones? When these were first made the objects of worship, they were supposed to be animated by some celestial power or spirit; but by degrees the thought of this was lost, and so vain did idolaters become in their imagination, even the princes and priests themselves, that the very idol, though made of wood and stone, was supposed to be their father, and adored accordingly.

3. They multiplied these dunghill-deities endlessly; (v. 28.) According to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah. When they had forsaken that God who is one, and all-sufficient for all, (1.) They were not satisfied with any gods they had, but still desired more; that idolatry being in this respect of the same nature with covetousness, which is spiritual idolatry, that the more men have the more they would have; which is a plain evidence, that what men make an idol of they find to be insufficiency. (2.) These, as the saying is, They became thereof unto perfect. (2.) They could not agree in the same god; having left the Centre of unity, they fell into endless discord; one city fancied one deity, and another another, and each was anxious to have one of its own, to be near them, and to take special care of them. Thus did they in vain seek that in many gods, which is to be found in one God.

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

1. They went about to deny it, and were ready to plead Not guilty. They pretended that they would acquit themselves from this guilt, they washed themselves with nitre, and took much soap, offered many things in excuse and extenuation of it, v. 22. They pretended that they did not worship the gods, but as demons, and mediators between the immortal God and mortal men; or, that it was not divine honour that they gave them, but civil respect; that they sought to evade the convictions of God's words, and to screen themselves from the dread of his wrath. Nay, some of them had the impudence to deny the thing; "I have not gone after Baalim," v. 23. Because it was done secretly, and industriously concealed, (Ezek. viii. 19.) they thought it could never be proved upon them, and they had frown enough to deny it. In this, as in other things, their way was like that of the adulterous woman, that says, I have done no wrong, (v. 22.)

2. Notwithstanding all their evasions, they are convicted of it, and found guilty; "How canst thou deny the fact, and say, I have not gone after Baalim? How canst thou deny the fault, and say, I am not polluted?" The prophet speaks with wonder at their impudence; "How canst thou put on a face to say so, when it is certain, (Pr. x. 26.) God's omniscience is manifest; and his justice and severity is justly marked before me, saith the Lord God; it is laid up and hidden, to be produced against thee in the day of judgment; sealed up among his treasures." (Dent. xxxii. 34. Job xxi. 19. Hos. xiii. 12.) "It is imprinted deep, and staine before me;" so some read it.

Thus when they endeavoured to wash it out, as murderers to get the stain of the blood of the person slain out of their clothes, yet it will never be got out. God's eye is upon it, and we are sure that this judgment is according to truth. (2.) "Thine own conscience is a witness against thee. See thy way in the valley;" (they had worshipped idols, not only on the high hills, but in the valleys, (Isa. lvii. 3, 6.) in the valley over against Beth-peor, (so some make,) were they worshipped Baal-peor; (Dent. xxxiv. 6. Numb. xxx. 3.) for whatever they practised was not less than the iniquity of Peor; but if it mean any particular valley, surely it is the valley of the son of Hinnom, for that was the place where they sacrificed their children to Moloch, and which therefore witnessed against them more than any other; "look into that valley, and thou canst not but know what thou hast done." (Dent. xxv. 15.)

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

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

2. They had promised fair, but had not made good their promise; "Thou saidst, I will not transgress;" then when the mercy of thy deliverance was fresh, thou wast so sensible of it, that thou wast willing to lay thyself under the most sacred ties to continue faithful to thy God, and never to forsake him. Then they said, Nay but we will serve the Lord, (Josh. xxiv. 14.) but when they say, that we would not transgress, we would not offend any more, and yet we have started aside, like a deceitful bow, and repeated and multiplied our transgressions! 3. They had wickedly degenerated from what they were when God first formed them into a people; (v. 21.) I had planted thee a noble vine. The constitution of their government both in church and state was excellent, the laws just, the ordinances instructive, and very significant; and a generation of good men there was among them when they first settled in Canaan; Israel served the Lord, and kept close to him, all the days of Joshua, and the elders that out-lived Joshua; (Josh. xxiv. 31.) they were then wholly a right seed, likely to remain the vine, which they were planted in with choice vines: but it proved otherwise; the very next generation knew not the Lord, nor the works which he had done, (Judg. ii. 10.) and so they were worse
and worse till they became the degenerate plants of a strange vine: they were now the reverse of what they were at first; their constitution was quite broken, and there was nothing in them of that good which one might have expected from a people so happily formed, nothing of the purity and piety of their ancestors. *Their vine is as the vine of Sodom; Deut. xxxii. 32.* This may possibly be applied to the nature of man; it was planted by its great Author; it had the fruits of God, and was in a good situation; but it is so universally corrupt, that it is become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, that bears gall and wormwood, and it is so to God, it is highly distasteful and offensive to him. 4. They were violent and eager in the pursuit of their idolatries, dotted on their idols, and were fond of new ones, and they would not be restrained from them, notwithstanding the fear of God, nor by his providences; so strong was the impiety with which they were carried out after this sin. They are here compared to a swift dromedary traversing her ways, a female of that species of creature hunting about for a male, (v. 23.) and, to the same purport, a wild ass used to the wilderness, (v. 24.) not tamed by labour, and therefore very wanton, sniffing up the wind at her pleasure when she comes near the herd. These are the merchantmen of Egypt, of whom she speaks of her captivity, (Jer. ii. 8.) Who can hinder her from that which she lusts after? They that seek her then, will not weary themselves for her, for they know it is to no purpose; but will have a little patience till she is big with young, till that month comes which is the last of the months that she fulfills, (Job xxxix. 2.) when she is heavy and unwieldy, and then they shall find her, and she cannot outrun them. *Note, (1.) Eager lust is a brutish thing, and those that will not be turned away from the gratifying and indulging of it by reason and conscience and honour, are to be reckoned as brute beasts and no better; such as were born, and still are, like the wild ass's colt, let them not be looked upon as rational creatures. (2.) Idolatry is strangely intoxicating, and those that are addicted to it will with great difficulty be cured of it. That lust is as headstrong as any other. (3.) There are some so violently set upon the prosecution of their lusts, that it is to no purpose to attempt to give check to them: they that do it, weary themselves in vain. Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone. (4.) The time will come when the most fierce will be tamed, and the most wanton will be manageable; when distress and anguish come upon them, then their cars will be open, and they will be able to discipline the beasts in that month in which you may find them. Ps. cxli. 5, 6. 5. They were obstinate in their sin, and, as they could not be restrained, so they would not be reformed, v. 25. Here is, (1.) Fair warning given them of the ruin that this wicked course of life would certainly bring them to at last, with a caution therefor not to persist in it, but to break off from it; he would certainly bring them into a miserable captivity, which they would not be able to escape from; they should be forced to travel barefoot, and when they would be denied fair water by their oppressors, so that their throat should be dried with thirst; this will be in the end hereof. They that affect strange gods, and strange ways of worship, will justly be made prisoners to a strange king in a strange land. Take up in time therefore thy running after thy idols, and thy feasting of thy foot, and thy shaking after them will bring thy throat to thirst; *whibhold therefore thy foot* from these violent pursuits, and thy throat from these violent desires. One would think that it should effectually check us in the career, to consider what it will bring us to at last. (2.) Their rejecting of this fair warning; they said to those that would have persuaded them to repent and return, *There is no hope, no, never expect to work upon us, or prevail with us to cast away our idols, for we have loved strangers, and after them we will go; we are resolved we will, and therefore trouble not yourselves or us any more with your admonitions, it is to no purpose.* There is no hope that we should ever break the corrupt habit and disposition we have got, and therefore we may as well yield to it as go about to get the mastery of it. *Note, Their case is very miserable, who have believed not the truth of God, nor the grace of Jesus Christ, and are set upon their destruction; their corruptions triumph over their convictions; they know they should reform, but own they cannot, and therefore resolve they will not. But as we must not despise the mercy of God, but believe that sufficient for the pardon of our sins, though ever so heinous, if we repent, and sue for that mercy, so neither must we despise of the grace of God, but believe that able to subdue our corruptions they ever so strong, if we pray for and improve that grace. A man must never say, *There is no hope,* as long as he is on this side hell. 6. They had shamed themselves by their sin, in putting confidence in that which would certainly deceive them in the day of their distress, and putting him away, that would have helped them; *v. 26—29.* As the thief is ashamed when, notwithstanding all his arts and skill in the way of evading and bringing to punishment, *So are the house of Israel ashamed,* not with a penitent shame for the sin they had been guilty of, but with a penal shame for the disappointment they met with in that sin. They will be ashamed when they find, (1.) That they are forced to cry to the God whom they had put contempt upon. In their prosperity they had turned the back to God, and not the face; they had slighted him, acted as if they had forgotten him, or did what they could to forget him, would not look toward him, but looked another way; they went from him as fast and as far as they could; but in the time of their trouble they will find no satisfaction but in applying themselves to him; then they will say, *Arise, and save us.* Their fathers had many a time taken this shame to themselves, (Judg. iii. 9.—v. 3. x. 16.) yet they would not be persuaded to cleave to God, that they might have come to him in their trouble with more confidence. (2.) That they have no relief from the gods they have made their court to. They will be ashamed when they perceive that the gods they have made cannot serve them, and that the God who made them will not serve them. To bring them to this, the Lord would urge their calamities; if they must go to judgment, let them go to judgment by way of repentance, they are here sent to the gods whom they served, as Jud. x. 14. They cried to God, *Arise,* and save us; God says of the idols, *"Let them arise, and save thee, for then hath no reason to expect that I should. Let them arise, if they can, from the places where they are fixed; let them try whether they can save thee; but then will he be ashamed when thou findest that they cannot save thee no good, for then they have found thee and the gods you loved are herd without inhabitant."* v. 15. This is the folly of sinners to please themselves with that which will certainly be their grief, and pride themselves in that which will certainly be their shame. 29. Wherefore will ye plead with me? ye all have transgressed against me, saith the Lord. 30. In vain have I smitten your children: they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion. 31. O generation, see ye the word of the Lord: Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? Wherefore say my people, We are lords; we
will come no more unto thee? 32. Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number. 33. Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love; therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways. 34. Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these. 35. Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me: behold I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned. 36. Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria. 37. Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thy hands upon thy head: for the Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.

The prophet here goes on in the same strain, aiming to bring a sinful people to repentance, that their destruction might be prevented. 1. He inverts the truth of the charge; it was evident beyond contradiction, it was the greatest absurdity imaginable in them to think of denying it; (v. 32.) "Wherefore, saith the Lord, wilt thou plead with me, and put me upon the proof of it, or wherefore will you go about to plead any thing in excuse of the crime, or to obtain a mitigation of the sentence? Your plea will certainly be overruled, and judgment given against you: you know you have all transgressed, one as well as another; why then do you quarrel with me for contending with you?" 2. He aggravates it from the consideration both of their incorrigibility and of their ingratitude. (1.) They had been wrought upon by the judgments of God which they had been under; (v. 36.) In vain have I sinned your children, the children or people of Judah. They had been under divine reproofs of many kinds. God therein designed to bring them to repentance, but it was in vain, they did not consider well the afflicting them; their consciences were not awakened, nor their hearts softened and humbled, nor were they driven to seek unto God, they received no instruction by the correction, were not made the better by it; and it is a great loss thus to lose an affliction; they did not receive, they did not submit to, or comply with, the correction, but their hearts fretted against the Lord, and so they were smitten in vain, they the children, the young people, among them, (so it may be taken,) were smitten in vain; they were so soon prejudiced against repentance, that they were as untractable as the old ones that had been long accustomed to do evil. (2.) They had not been wrought upon by the word of God, which he had sent them in the mouth of his servants and prophets, which were sent by him, and the messengers for the sake of the message: Your own sword has devoured your prophets like a destroying lion; you have put them to death for their faithfulness, with as much rage and fury, and with as much greediness and pleasure, as a lion devours his prey. The prophets, who were their greatest blessings, were treated by them as if they had been the plagues of their generation, and this was their measure-filling sin, (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.) they killed their own prophets. 1 Thess. ii. 15. (3.) They had not been wrought upon by the favours God had bestowed upon them; (v. 31.) "O generation," (the does not call them, as he might, O faithless and perverse generation, O generation of fikers, but speaks gently, O ye men of this generation) "see ye the word of the Lord, do not only hear it, but consider it diligently, apply your minds closely to it." As we are bid to hear the rod, (Machi vi. 9.) for in that it has its voice, are we bid to hear the word, for that has its visions, its views. It intimates, the word of the Lord is a rod, and that its voice is deniable; you may see it to be very evident; it is written as with a sun-beam, so that he that runs may read it. Have I been a wilderness to Israel, a land of darkness? Note, None of those who have had any dealings with God ever had reason to complain of him as a wilderness, or a land of darkness. I have blessed him with the fruits of the earth, and therefore I cannot say that he has been a wilderness to us, a dry and barren land, that (as Mr. Gaterker expresses it) he has held us to hard meat, as cattle fed upon the common; no, his sheep have been led into green pastures. He has also blessed us with the lights of heaven, and has not withheld them, so that we cannot say, He has been to us a land of darkness. He has caused his sun to shine, as well as his rain to fall, upon the evil and the good. Or, the meaning is, in general, that the service of God has not been to any either as an unpleasant or an unprofitable service. God sometimes has led his people through a wilderness, and a land of darkness, but he himself was then to them all that which they needed, he so fed them with manna, and led them by a pillar of fire, that it was to them aU a guidance, and a land of light. The world is those who make it their home and their portion, a wilderness, and a land of darkness, vanity and vexation of spirit; but those that dwell in God, have the lines fallen to them in pleasant places. (4.) Instead of being wrought upon these, they were grown intolerably insolent and impious. They say, We are lords, we will come no more unto thee. Now that they were become a potent kingdom, or thought themselves such, they set up for themselves, and shook off their dependence upon God. This is the language of presumptuous sinners, and it is not only very impious and profane, but very unreasonable and foolish. (1.) It is absurd for us, who are subjects, to say, We are lords, (that is, rulers,) and we will come no more to God to receive commands. One is the King of old, so he is King for ever, and we cannot, as we please, break with him from under his authority. (2.) It is absurd for us, who are beggars, to say, We are lords, that is, We are rich, and we will come no more to God, to receive favours from him, as if we could live without him, and need not to be beholden to him. God justly takes it ill, when those to whom he has been a bountiful Benefactor, cannot neither for hearing from him or speaking to him. 3. He lays the blame of all their wickedness upon their forgetting God; (v. 32.) They have forgotten me; they have industriously banished the thoughts of God out of their minds, justly those thoughts cut with thoughts of their idols, and avoided all these things that would put them in mind of God. (1.) He commands them to consider the compassion of God, for the purpose he had toward them, and professed relation to him, and had the tokens of his presence in the midst of them, and of his favour to them, yet they forget him. (2.) They had long neglected him, days without number, time out of mind, as we say. They had not for a great while entertained any serious thoughts of him; so that they seem quite to have forgotten him, and regarded neither his tokens nor his presence; for many days of our lives have passed without suitable remembrance of God? Who can number those empty days? (3.) They had not had such a regard and af
fection to him, as young ladies generally have to their fine clothes; Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? No, their hearts are upon them, they value them so much, and the beholders upon them, that they are ever and anon thinking and speaking of them; when they are to appear in public, they do not forget any of their ornaments, but put every one in its place, as they are described, Isa. iii. 18, &c. And yet my people have forgotten me. It is said that any should be more in love with their fine clothes than with their God; and will dally with them, and the beholders upon them, or part with that, than leave any of their ornaments behind them, or part with them. Is not God our Ornament? Is he not a Crown of glory, and a Diadem of beauty, to his people? Did we look upon him to be so, and upon our religion as an ornament of grace to our head, and chains about our neck, (Prov. i. 9.) we should be as mindful of them as every maid was of her ornaments, or a bride of her attire; we should be as careful to preserve them, and as fond to appear in them.

4. He shows them what a bad influence their sins had had upon others; the sins of God's professing people harden and encourage these about them in their evil ways, especially when they appear forward and ringleaders in sin; (v. 33.) Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love? There is an allusion here to womanly manners, which was a great point of adornment in the ancients, and made the ways of their idolatry worse than that of others. These have a great deal to answer for, who, by their fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, make wicked ones more wicked than otherwise they would be.

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

6. He overrules their plea of Not guilty. Though this matter be so plain, yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me; and again, Thou sayest I have not sinned, (v. 35.) therefore I will plead with thee, and will convince thee of thy mistake. Because they deny the charge, and stand upon their own justification, therefore God will deal with them, and plead with them, both by his word and by his rod. These shall be made to know how much they deceived themselves. (1.) Who say that they have not offended God, that they are innocent, though they have been guilty of the grossest enormities. (2.) Who expect that God will be reconciled to them, though they do not repent and reform. They own that they had been under the tokens of God's anger, but they think that it was causeless, and that they by pleading innocence had proved it to be so, and therefore they can conclude that God will immediately turn his action, and his anger shall be turned from them. This is very provoking, and God will plead with them, and convince them that his anger is just, for they have sinned and he will never cease his controversy, till they, instead of justifying themselves thus, humble, and judge, and condemn themselves.

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

**CHAP. III.**

The foregoing chapter was wholly taken up with reproofs, and threatenings against the people of God; for the apostates from him; but in this chapter, gracious invitations and encouragements are given them to return and repent, notwithstanding the multitude and greatness of their provocations, which are here aggravated, to magnify the mercy of God, and to show that as a sin-abondoned grace did much more abound. Here, I. It is further showed how bad they had been, and how well they deserved to be quite abandoned, and yet how ready God was to receive them into his favour, upon their repentance, v. 1-5. II. The impenitence of Judah, and their persisting in sin, are aggrandised from the judgments of God upon Israel, which they should have taken warning by, v. 6-11. III. Great encouragements are given to these backsliders to return and repent; and promises made of great mercy which God had in store for them, and which he should prepare them for by bringing them to a low estate. Here, IV. The charge renewed against them for their apostasy from God, and the invitation repeated to return and repent, to which are here added the words that are put in their mouth, which they should make use of in their return to God, v. 20-25.

1. _They say_, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted: but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord. 2. Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lieth: in the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms, and with thy wickedness. 3. Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hast a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed. 4. Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth? 5. Will he reserve his anger for ever? will he keep it to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst. These verses some make to belong to the sermon in the foregoing chapter, and they open a door of hope to those who receive the conviction of the reproofs we had; therefore God wounds, that he may heal. Now observe here, I. How basely this people had forsaken God, and gone a whoring from him. The charge runs very high here: 1. They had multiplied their idols, and their idolatry. They have adorned one strange god among them, and been hound enough, but they were insatiable in their lustings after false worship; Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, v. 1. She was become a common prostitute to idols; not a foolish deity was set up in all the neighbourhood, but the Jews would have it quickly. Where was a high place in the country, but they had an idol in it? v. 2. 2. In repentance, it is good to make sorrowful reflections upon the particular acts of sin we have been guilty of, and the several places and companies where it has been committed, that we may give glory to God, and take shame to ourselves, by a particular confession of it. 2. They had sought opportunity for their idolatries, and had sent about to inquire for new gods; _In the high ways hast thou sat for them_, as Tamar when she put on the disguise of a harlot, (Gen. xxxviii. 14.) and as the foolish woman, that sits to call passengers, who go right on their way, Prov. ix. 14, 15. _As the Arabian in the wilderness: the Arabian huckster, (so some,) that courts customers, waits for the merchants to get a good bargain and forestall the market; or, the Arabian thief, (so others,) that watches for his prey; so had they waited either to court new gods to come among them, the newer the better, and the more fond they were of them, or to court others to join with them in the idolatries: they were not only sinners, but Satans; not only traitors themselves, but tempters to others. 3. They were grown very impudent in sin. They not only polluted themselves, but their land, with their whoredoms and with their wickedness; (v. 2.) for it was universal and unpunished, and so became a national sin. And yet, (v. 3.) Thou hast a whore's forehead, a bazon face of thy own. Thou refusedst to be ashamed; thou didst enough to shame for evil; and she would not shame herself. Blushing is the colour of virtue, or at least a relief of it; but those that are fast shame, (we say,) are fast hope. Those that have an adulterer's heart, if they indulge that, will come at length to have a whore's forehead, void of all shame and modesty. 4. They abounded in all manner of sin. They polluted the land not only with their whoredoms, their idolatries, but with their wickedness, or malice, (v. 2.) sins against the second table: for how can we think that those should be true to their neighbour, that are false to their God? Nay, (v. 5.) thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst; and wouldst have spoken and done worse, if thou hadst known how; thy will was to do it, but thou hast lost opportunity. Note, Those are wicked indeed that sin to the utmost of their power; that never refuse to comply with a temptation because they should not, but because they cannot. II. How gently God had corrected them for their sins. Instead of raining fire and brimstone upon them, because, like Sodom, they had abused their sin, and had gone after strange gods, as Sodom after strange flesh, he only withheld the showers from them, and that only one part of the year, _there has been no latter rain_; which might serve as an intimation to them of their continual dependence upon God; when they had the former rain, that was no security to them for the latter, but they must still look up to God: but it had not this effect. III. How gently God had of late abandoned them utterly, and refused ever to receive them again, though they should return; this would have been but according to the known rule of divorces, v. 1. They say, it is an adjudged case, nay, it is a case in which the law is very express, and it is what every body knows and speaks of, (Dent. xxxiv. 4.) that if a woman be once put away for whoredom, and be not restored to another man, her first husband shall not seek upon any pretence whatever, take her again to be his wife; such playing fast and loose with the marriage-bond would be a horrid profanation of that ordinance, and would greatly pollute that land. Observe what the law says in this case; They say, every one will say, and subscribe to the equity of the law in it; for every man finds something in himself, that forbids him to entertain one that is another
man's. And in like manner they had reason to expect that God should refuse ever to take them to be his people again, who had not only been joined to: one strange god, but had played the harlot with many lovers. If we had to do with a man like ourselves, after such provocations as we have been guilty of, he would have been implacable, and we might have despair'd of his being reconciled to us. N. H. He sincerely bid he not only invites them, but directs them, to return to him.

1. He encourages them to hope that they should find favour with him, upon their repentance; "Though thou hast been bad, yet return again to me," v. 1. This implies a promise that he will receive them: "Return, and thou shalt be welcome." God has not tied himself by the laws which he might have decreed to us for our religion, that all men have: he will be more kind to Israel, for the sake of his covenant with them, than ever any injured husband was to an adulterous wife; for in receiving penitents, as much as in any thing, he is God, and not man.

2. He therefore kindly expects that they will return, and return to him, and he directs them what to say to him; "Wilt thou not come, Wilt thou not return? What ever thou hast said or done hitherto, wilt thou not from this time cry unto me? Wilt thou not in this relation to me, and on whom I have laid such obligations, wilt thou cry to me? Though thou hast been a whoring from me, yet, when thou findest the folly of it, surely thou wilt think of returning to me, now at least, now at last, in this thy day. Wilt thou not at this time, nay, wilt thou not from this time on what ever thou hast said or done hitherto, wilt thou not from this time apply thyself to me? From this time of conviction and correction; now that thou hast been made to see thy sins, (v. 2) and to smart for them, (v. 3) wilt thou not now forsake them, and return to me, saying, I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now?": Hos. 7. Or, "From this time that thou hast kind so kind an invitation to return, and assurance that thou shalt be well received; will not this grace of God overcome thee? Now that pardon is proclaimed, wilt thou not come in, and take the benefit of it? Surely thou wilt." (1.) He expects they will claim relation to God, as theirs; Wilt thou not cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth? [v. 1. They will speak to him as a Father, who, by direction, have directed them for their unfaithful conduct to him, (Father, I have sinned,) and will hope to find in him the tender compassions of a Father towards a returning prodigal. They will come to him as a Father, to whom they will make their complaints, and in whom they will put their confidence for relief and succour. They will now own him as their Father, and themselves fatherless without him; and therefore hoping to find mercy with him, as those penitents, Hos. xiv. 3. [2.] They will come to him as the Guide of their youth, as their Husband; for so that relation is described, Mal. ii. 14. "Though thou hast gone after many lovers, surely thou wilt at length remember the love of thine espousals, and return to the husband of thy youth." Or, it may be, through the power of this prayer they will no longer treat God as the Guide of my youth. Youth needs a guide. In our return to God, we must thankfully remember that he was the Guide of our youth, in the way of comfort; and we must faithfully covenant that he shall be our Guide from henceforth in the way of duty, and that we will follow his guidance, and give up ourselves entirely to it; that in all doubtful cases we will apply to God, (v. 2.) He expects they will appeal to the mercy of God, and crave the benefit of that mercy, (v. 5.) that they will reason thus with themselves for their encouragement to return to him; "Will he reserve his anger for ever? Surely he will not, for he has proclaimed his name gracious and merciful." Repenting sinners may encourage themselves with this, that though God chide, he will not always chide; though he be angry, he will not keep his anger to the end, but that though he cause grief, he will have compassion, and may thus plead for reconciliation.

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

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

1. Here is a short account of Israel, the ten tribes. Perhaps the prophet had been just reading the history of that country, when he says, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? v. 6. For he could not see it otherwise than in history, they having been carried into captivity
long before he was born; but what we read in the
histories of scripture should instruct us and affect us,
as we ourselves have been eye-witnesses of it.
She is called backsliding Israel, because that king-
dom was first founded in an apostasy from the di-
vine institutions, both in church and state. Now he
had seen concerning them,
(1.) That they were wickedly addicted to
idolatry; they had played the harlot upon every
high mountain, and under every green tree; (v. 6.)
and they had worshipped other gods in their high places
and groves; and no marvel, when from the first they
had worshipped God by the images of the golden
calves at Dan and Bethel. The way of idolatry is
downhill: they that are in love with images, and
will have them, soon become in love with other gods,
and will have them too; for how should they stick at
the breach of the first commandment, who make
no conscience of the second?
(2.) That God by his prophets had invited and
encouraged them to repent and reform; (v. 7.)
"When she had done all these things, for which she
might justly have been abandoned, yet said unto
her, Turn thou unto me, and I will receive thee." 
Though they had forsaken both the house of David,
and the house of worship, which was not an
usterity divine—(from God, without dispute, yet
God sent his prophets among them, to call them to
return to him, to the worship of him only, not in-
sisting so much as one would have expected upon
their return to the house of David, but pressing their
return to the house of Aaron: we read not that
Elijah, that great reformer, ever mentioned their
return to the house of David, whose name was
Joahaz, who was responsible for their return to the faithful service of the true
God according as they had it among them. It is
serious piety that God stands upon more than even
his own rituals.
(3.) That, notwithstanding this, they had per-
sisted in their idolatries; but she returned not, and
God saw it; he took notice of it, and was much dis-
pleased with it, v. 7, 8. Note, God keeps account,
whether we do or no, how often he has called us
to turn to him, and we have refused.
(4.) That he had therefore cast them off, and
given them up into the hands of their enemies; (v. 8.)
When I saw (so it may be read) that for all the
actions wherein she had committed adultery, I must
dismiss her, I gave her a bill of divorce. God
divorced them out of his protection, and left them an easy prey to any that
would lay hands on them; when he scattered all
their synagogues and schools of the prophets, and
excluded them from laying any further claim to the
covenant made with their fathers. Note, Those
will justly be divorced from God, that join them-
selves to such as are rivals to God for proof
of their way, and see what God did to Israel.
2. Let us now see what was the case of Judah,
the kingdom of the two tribes; she is called thy
treacherous sister Judah; a sister, because descend-
ed from the same common stock, Abraham and
Jacob: but as Israel had the character of a back-
slider, so Judah is called treacherous, because,
though she professed to keep close to God when
her first wooed, (she adhered to the kings and
priests that were of God's own appointing, and
did not withdraw from her allegiance, so that it was
expected she should deal faithfully,) yet she proved
treacherous and false, and unfaithful to her profes-
sions and promises. Note, The treachery of those
who pretend to cleave to God, will be reckoned for,
as well as the treachery of those who openly revol-
ved from him. Judah saw what Israel did, and what
use of it, and should have taken warning; Israel's
covetousness was intended for Judah's admonition, but
it had not the designed effect. Judah feared not,
but thought herself safe because she had Levites to
be her priests, and sons of David to be her kings.
Note, It is an argument of great stupidity and secu-
ritv, when we are not awakened to a holy fear by
the judgments of God upon others. It is here
charged on Judah,
(1.) That when they had a wicked king that de-
bouched them, they heartily concurred with him in his
delaborations. Judah was far enough to go not to the
house of David, but to the house of the tribe of
Judah; he was seduced among them, and to join in any idolatrous
usage; so that through the lightness (or, as some
read it, the wilfulness and baseness) of her whoredom,
or, as the margin reads it, by the fame and report
of her whoredom, her notorious whoredom, for
which she was become infamous, she defiled the
land, and made it abominable to God, for she had
committed adultery with stones and stocks, with
the basest idols, those made of wood and stone.
In the reigns of Manasseh and Amon, when they were dis-
posed to idolatry, the people were so true, and all the
country was corrupted with it, and none feared the
ruin which Israel by this means had brought upon
themselves.
(2.) That when they had a good king that re-
formed them, they did not heartily concur with him
in the reformation: that was the present case. God
tried whether they would be good in a good reign,
but the evil disposition was still the same; They
returned not to me with their whole heart, but
feignedly, v. 10. Josiah went further in destroying
idolatry than the best of his predecessors had done,
and for his own part he turned to the Lord, and
set his heart and with all his soul; so it is said of
him, 2 Kings xxiii. 23. The people were forced to
an external compliance with him, and joined with
him in keeping a very solemn passover, and in re-
newing their covenants with God; (2 Chron. xxxiv.
32—xxxv. 17.) but they were not sincere in it, nor
were their hearts right with God. For this reason
God at that very time said, (v. 11.) I will remove Judah
out of my sight, as I removed Israel, (2 Kings
xxiii. 37.) because Judah was not removed from
their sin by the sight of Israel's removal from their
land. Hypocritical and ineffectual reformations
bode ill to a people. We deceive ourselves, if we
think to deceive God by a feigned return to him; I
know no religion without sincerity.
3. The case of these sister-kingdoms is compared,
and judgments are pronounced upon the comparison, that of
the two Judah was the worse; (v. 11.) Israel has
justified herself more than Judah, she is not so bad
as Judah is. This comparative justification will
stand Israel in little stead; what will it avail us to
say, We are not so bad as others, when yet we are
not really good ourselves. But it will serve as an
aggravation of Judah's sin, that which would
be done better than that of Israel. (1.) More we
expected from Judah than from Israel: so that
Judah dealt treacherously, they vilified a more
sacred profession, and falsified a more solemn
promise, than Israel did. (2.) Judah might have taken
warning by the ruin of Israel for their idolatry, and
would not. God's judgments upon others, if they
be not means of our reformation, which is to agrava-
tions of our destruction. The prophet Ezekiel (ch
xxii. 11.) makes the same comparison between
Jerusalem and Samarita, that this prophet here
makes between Judah and Israel, and, (Ezek.
xvi. 48.) between Jerusalem and Sodom, and Jeru-
usalem is made the worst of the three.
12. Go, and proclaim these words toward the
north, and say, Return, thou backsliding
Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause
mine anger to fall upon you; for I am me
culful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep
anger for ever. 13. Only acknowledge
thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed
against the Lord thy God, and hast scat-
ttered thy ways to the strangers under every
green tree, and yet have not obeyed my
voice, saith the Lord. 14. Turn, O back-
sliding children, saith the Lord; for I am
married unto you: and I will take you one
of a city, and two of a family, and I will
bring you to Zion: 15. And I will give you
pastors according to my heart, which shall
feed you with knowledge and understanding.
16. And it shall come to pass, when ye be
multiplied and increased in the land, in those
days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more,
The ark of the covenant of the Lord; neither
shall it come to mind, neither shall they re-
member it, neither shall they visit it, neither
shall that be done any more. 17. At that time
they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the
Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered
unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jeru-
usalem: neither shall they walk any more after
the imagination of their evil heart. 18. In
those days the house of Judah shall walk
with the house of Israel, and they shall
come together out of the land of the north
to the land that I have given for an inheri-
tance unto your fathers. 19. But I said,
How shall I put thee among the children,
and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly
heritage of the hosts of nations? And I
said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and
shall not turn away from me.

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

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

JEREMIAH, III.

go to the dispersed Jews among the Gentiles, it was
concluded that he would teach the Gentiles, John
vii. 55. So here,

1. There is an invitation given to backsliding Israel,
and in them to the backsliding Gentiles, to return
unto God, the God from whom they had revolted;
(v. 12.) Return, O backsliding Israel. And again,
(v. 14.) O backsliders, return to your allegiance; come
back to that good way which you have missed, and
out of which you have turned aside." Pursuant to
this invitation, 1. They are encouraged to return;
Repent, and be converted, and your sins shall be
blotted out, Acts iii. 19. You have incurred God's
displesasure, but return to me, and I will not cause
anger to rest upon you, if you repent. 2. The way is
ready to fall upon sinners, as a lion falls on his
prey; and there is none to deliver; as a mountain of
leed, falling on them, to sink them past recovery into
the lowest hell. But if they repent it shall be turned
away, Isa. xii. 1. I will not keep mine anger for
ever, but will be reconciled, for I am merciful. We
that are sinful, were for ever undone, if God were
of his nature to punish the goodness of his nature encour-
ages us to hope that if we by repentance and what
we have done against him, he will by a pardon un-
yes what he has said against us. 2. They are dis-
rected how to return; (v. 13.) "Only acknowledge
thine iniquity, own thyself in a fault, and thereby
take shame to thyself, and give glory to God." I
will not keep my anger for ever; (that is a previ-
ously pronounced judgment) shall be delivered from that
anger of God which is everlastingly un seizible
when it come; but upon what terms? Very easy and rea-
sonsable ones. Only acknowledge thy sins; if we con-
fiess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive
them. This will aggravate the condemnation of
sinners, that the terms of pardon and peace were
brought so low, and yet they would not come up to
them. If the prophet had bid them do some great
things, would they not have done it? How much more
when he says, Only acknowledge thine iniquity? 2 Kings
v. 15. In confessing sin, (1.) We must own the corruption of our nature; Acknow-
ledge thine iniquity; the perverseness and irregru-
farity of thy nature. (2.) We must own our actual
sins, "that thou hast transgressed against the Lord
thy God, hast affronted him and offended him.
" 3. We must own our actual transgressions,
that thou hast scattered thy ways to the
strangers, run hither and thither in pursuit of thine
dulds, under every green tree. Wherever thou hast
rambled, thou hast left behind thee the marks of
thy folly. (4.) We must aggravate our sin from
the disobedience that there is in it to the divine law.
The sinfulness of sin is the worst thing in it; "If
we have not obeyed thy voice, acknowledge that,
and let that humble you more than sin.

II. Here are precious promises made to these
backsliding children, if they do return; which were
in put fulfilled in the return of the Jews out of their
captivity, many that belonged to the ten tribes hav-
ing perhaps joined themselves to those of the two
tribes, in the prospect of their deliverance, and re-
turning with them; but is to have its full accom-
plishment in the present time, and the gathering
of the children of God that were scattered
broad to that. "Return, for though you are back-
sliders, yet you are children; nay, though a treache-
rous wife, yet a wife, for I am married to you, (v.
14.) and will not disown the relation." Thus God
remembers his covenant with their fathers, that
marriage-covenant, and in consideration of that he
remembers them. And, I. He promises to gather them
togther from all places whither they are dispersed and scattered
broad; (John xi. 52.) I will take you, one of a city,
and two of a family, or clan; and I will bring you to Zion. All those that by repentance return to their duty, shall return to their former comfort. Observe, (1.) God will graciously receive those that return to him, nay, it is he that by his distinguishing grace takes them out from among the rest that persist in the sin in which they had been undone. (2.) Of the many that have backslidden from God, there are but few, very few in comparison, that return to him, like the gleanings of the vintage; one of a city, and two of a country; Christ's flock is a little flock, and few there be that find the strait gate. (3.) Of those few, though dispersed, yet not one shall be lost. The nations, at large, but the branch which is not out that one; he shall not be overlooked in a crowd, but shall be brought safe to Zion, safe to Heaven. The scattered Jews shall be brought to Jerusalem, and those of the ten tribes shall be as welcome there as those of the two. God's chosen, scattered all the world over, shall be brought to the gospel-church, that mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, that holy hill on which Christ reigns.

2. He promises to set those over them that shall be every way blessings to them; (v. 15.) I will give you pastors after my heart, alluding to the character given of David, when God pitched upon him to be king; (1 Sam. xiii. 14.) The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart. Observe, (1.) When a church is gathered it must be governed. I will have them be, who shall make his will their rule, to be under discipline, not as wild beasts, that range at pleasure, but as sheep that are under the direction of a shepherd. I will give them pastors, magistrates and ministers; both are God's ordinance for the support of his kingdom. (2.) It is well with a people when their pastors are after God's own heart; such as they should be, such as he would have them be, who shall make his will their rule, to be under discipline, not as wild beasts, that range at pleasure, but as sheep that are under the direction of a shepherd. I will give them pastors, magistrates and ministers; both are God's ordinance for the support of his kingdom.

3. He promises that there should be no more occasion for the ark of the covenant, which had been so much the glory of the tabernacle first, and afterwards of the temple, and was the token of God's presence with them; that shall be set aside, and there shall be no more inquiry after, nor inquiring after, it; (v. 16.) When ye be multiplied and increased in the land, when the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up, which by the accession of the Gentiles will bring into the church a vast increase, (and the days of the Messiah the Jewish patriarchs themselves acknowledge to be here intended,) then they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord, they shall have it no more among them to value, or value themselves upon, because they shall have a pure spiritual way of worship set up, in which there shall be no occasion for any of those external ordinances; with the ark of the covenant the whole ceremonial law shall be set aside, and all the institutions of it, for Christ, the Truth of all those types, exhibited to us in the word and sacraments of the New Testament, will be to us instead of all. It is very likely (whatever the Jews suggest to the contrary) that the ark of the covenant was in the second temple, being restored by Cyrus with the other vessels of the house of the Lord, Ezra i. 7. But in the gospel-temple Christ is the Ark, he is the Propitiatory, or Mercy-seat; and it is the spiritual presence of God in his ordinances that we are now to expect. Many expressions are here used concerning the ark of the covenant, written for that it shall not come to mind, that they shall not remember. But they shall not visit it, that none of these things shall be any more done; for the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, John iv. 24. But this variety of expressions is used, to show that the ceremonies of the law of Moses should be totally and finally abolished, never to be used any more; to let the Jews know that those who had been so long wedged to them must not be weaned from them; and that they would not quite let them go till their Holy city and Holy house should both be levelled with the ground.

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

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

6. That Judah and Israel shall be happily united in one body, v. 18. They were so in their return out of captivity, and their settlement again in Canaan; The house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, as being perfectly agreed, and become one stick in the hand of the Lord, as Ezekiel also foretold, ch. xxxvii. 16, 17. Both Assyria and Chaldea fell into the hands of Cyrus, and his proclamation extended to all the Jews in all his dominions. And therefore we have reason to think that many of the house of Israel came with those of Judah into the land of the north; though at first there returned but forty-two thousand (whom we have an account of, Ezra ii.) yet Josephus says, (Antiq. lib. 11. cap. 4.) that some few years after, under Darius, Zerubbabel went, and fetched up above four millions of souls, to the land that was given for an inheritance to their fathers. And we never read of such amnesties and eminences between Israel and Judah as had been formerly. This happy concurrence between Israel and Judah in Canaan, was a type of the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in the gospel-church, when, all enmities being slain, they should become one sheeplord under one shepherd.
III. Here is some difficulty started, that lies in the way of all this mercy; but an expedient is found to get over it. 1. God asks, How shall I do this for thee? Not as if God showed favour with reluctance, as though he punishes with a How shall I give thee up? Hos. xi. 8, 9. No, though he is slow to anger, he is swift to show mercy. But it intimates that we are utterly unworthy of his favours, that we have no reason to expect them. This is not unfounded, in that we can lay no claim to them, and that he contrives how to do it in such a way as may save the honour of his justice and holiness in the government of the world; means must be devised, that his banished be not for ever expelled from him, 2 Sam. xiv. 14. How shall I do it? (1.) Even backsliders, if they return and repent, shall be put among the children; and who could ever have expected that? Behold, what manner of love is this! I John iii. 1. How should we, who are so mean and weak, so worthless and unworthy, and so provoking, ever be put among the children? (2.) Those whom God puts among the children, to them he will give the pleasant land, the land of Canaan, that glory of all lands, that goodly heritage of the host of nations, which nations and their bands wish for, and promise to themselves, (Isa. xxxv. 1-8,) that they which the host of nations have now got possession of: it was a type of heaven, where there are pleasures for ever more; now who could expect a place in that pleasant land, that has so often despised it, (Ps. cxxiv. 4,) and is so unworthy of it, and unfit for it? Is this the manner of men? 2. He does himself return answer to this question; But I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father. God does himself answer all the objections that are taken from our unworthiness, or they would never be got over. (1.) That he may put returning penitents among the children, he will give them the Spirit of adoption, teaching them to cry, Abba, Father, Gal. iv. 6. "Thou shalt call me, My Father; thou shalt return to me, and resign thyself to me as a Father, and that shall recommend thee to my favour." (2.) That he may give them the pleasant land, he will put his fear in their hearts, that they may never turn from him, but may persevere to the end. 20. Surely as a wife treacherously departed from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord. 21. A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the Lord their God. 22. Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God. 23. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel. 24. For shame hath devoured the labour of our fathers from their youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. 25. We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the Lord our God, and we are our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God.

Here is, 1. The charge God exhibits against Israel for their treacherous departures from him, v. 20. As an adulterous wife elopes from her husband, so have they gone a whoring from God. They were joined to God by a marriage covenant, but they broke that covenant, they dealt treacherously with God, who had always dealt kindly and faithfully with them. Treacherous dealing with men like ourselves is bad enough, but to deal treacherously with God is to deal treasonably.

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

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

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

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

2. They come disclaiming all expectations of relief and succour but from God only; In vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of the mountains; we now see our folly in relying upon creature-confidence, and will never so deceive ourselves any more. They worshipped
their idols upon hills and mountains, (v. 6.) and they had a multitude of idols upon their mountains, which they had sought unto and put a confidence in; but now they will have no more to do with them. In vain do we look for any thing that is good from them, while from God we may look for everything that is good; even salvation itself. Therefore,

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

4. They come justifying God in their troubles, and judging themselves for their sins, v. 24, 25. (1.) They impugn all the calamities they had been under to their idols, which had not only done them no good, but had done them abundance of mischief; all the mischief that had been done them: Shame, (the idol, that shameful thing,) has devised the labour of our fathers. Note, [1.] True penitents have learned to call sin shame; even the beloved sin, which has been as an idol to them, which they have been most pleased with and proud of, even that they shall call a scandalous thing, shall put content upon it. Some have made use of shame, true penitents have learned to call sin death and ruin, and to charge upon it all the mischiefs they suffer; 'It has devised all those good things which our fathers laboured for, and left to us; we have found from our youth that our idolatry has been the destruction of our prosperity. Children often throw away upon their lusts that which their fathers have done, great deal of foolishness; and it is well if they are brought (as these here) to see the folly of it, and to call those vices their shame, which have wasted their estates, and devised the labour of their fathers. They mention the labour of their fathers, which their idols had devised, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. First, Their idolatry had provoked God to bring these desolating judgments upon them, which had ruined their country and families, and made their estates a prey, and their children captives to the conquering enemy. They had procured these things to themselves. Or rather, Secondly, These had been sacrificed to their idols, had been separated unto that shame; (Hos. ix. 10.) and they had devised them without mercy, they did eat the fat of their sacrifices, (Hos. x. 2.) and they have offered sacrifices, (v. 1.) to themselves the shame of their sin and folly; (v. 25.) 'We lie down in our shame, being unable to bear up under it, our confusion covers us, both our penal and our penitential shame. Sin has laid us under such rebukes of God's providence, and such reproaches of our own consciences, as surround us, and fill us with shame. For we have sinned, and the sin of sinners is still attended upon us. We are sinners by descent, guilt and corruption were emasculated upon us; and we and our fathers have sinned; we were sinners betimes, we began early in a course of sin, we have sinned from our youth; we have continued in it, have sinned even unto this day, though often called to repent, and forsaken our sins, and not walked after them; for we have sinned, and the sin of our fathers is still attended upon us. This is the way God deals with sinners. He does not only lay them under the sight of their sins, but he terrifies them with a sense of the guilt and danger that they are in; by revealing to them the justice of God's purposes against them. He makes the Lord our God, bringing us to see the wretchedness of things, and the impossibility of being delivered from them, and the necessity of being wholly dependent upon God; and he, and commanding us, when we have sinned, to repent.' Now all this seems to be the language of the penitents of the house of Israel, (v. 20.) of the ten tribes; either of those that were in captivity, or of those of them that remained in their own land. And the prophet takes notice of their repentance, to provoke the men of Judah to a holy emulation. David used it as an argument with the elders of Judah, that it would be a shame for them, that were his bone and his flesh, to be the last in bringing the king back, when the men of Israel appeared forward in it, 2 Sam. xix. 11, 12. So the prophet excites Judah to repent, because Israel did; and well it were if the zions of others less likely would provoke us to strive to get before them, and go beyond them, in that which is good.

CHAP. IV.

It should seem that the two first verses of this chapter might better have been joined to the close of the foregoing chapter, for they are directed to Israel, the ten tribes, by way of reply to their compliance with God's call, directing and appointing them to gather together in repentance, v. 1, 2. The rest of the chapter concerns Judah and Jerusalem. They are called to repent and reform, v. 3.

1. They are warned of the advance of Nebuchadnezzar and his forces against them, and are told that it is for their sins, from which they are again exhorted to wash themselves, v. 5, 6. To affect them more with the greatness of the desolation that was coming, the prophet does not make mention of the mighty sympathize with his people in the calamities it brought upon them, and the plunge it brought them to, representing it as a reduction of the world to its first chaos, v. 19, 21.

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

When God called to backsliding Israel to return, (ch. iii. 22.) they immediately answered, Lord, we return; now God here takes notice of their answer, and, by way of reply to it, 1. He directs them how to pursue their good resolutions: 'Blest thou say, I will return,' (v. 3.) "Then thou must return, not make work of it. Do not only return from thine idolatries, but return to the instituted worship of the God of Israel." Or, "Thou must return speedily, and not delay; (as Isa. xxi. 12.) If ye will inquire, inquire ye; so, if ye will return unto me, return ye: do not talk of it, but do it." (2.) "Thou must utterly abandon all sin, and not retain any of the relics of idolatry; put away thine abominations out of the midst of thine heart, and of thine eyesight, out of all places, for every place is under mine eye; especially out of the temple; the house which I have in a particular manner mine eye upon, to see that it is kept clean. It intimates that their idolatries were not only obvious, but offensive to the eye of God; they were abominations which he could not endure the sight of, therefore they were to be put away out of his sight; put away thine abominations, even those idolatries, and will not wander after them any more; (v. 4.) They shall give unto God the glory due unto his name; (v. 2.) Thou shalt swear, the Lord liveth. His existence shall be with thee the most sacred fact, then which nothing can be more sure; and his judgment the supreme court to which thou shalt appeal, than which nothing can be more awful." Swearing is an act of religious worship, in which we are to give honour.
God three ways. [1.] We must 

swear by the true God 

only, and not by creatures, or any false gods; 

by the God that trueth, not by the gods that are 

defad, and dumb, and dead; by him only, and not 

by the Lord and by Malechah, as Zeph. i. 5. [2.] 

We must swear that only which is true, in 

truth and in righteousness; not daring to assert that 

which is false, or which we do not know to be true, or 

to assert that as certain, which is doubtful, or to pro-

mise that which we mean not to perform, or to vo-

late the promise we have made. To say that which 

is untrue, or to do that which is unrighteous, is bad, 

but to back either with an oath is much worse. 

[3.] We must do it solemnly, swear in judgment, 

that is, when judicially called to it, and not in con-

verse, (as Rah.) swearing is as profanation of God's name, as solemn swearing is an honour to it. See Deut. x. 20. Matth. v. 34, 37.

2. He encourages them to keep in this good mind, and adhere to their resolutions. If the scattered Israelsites will thus return to God, (1.) They shall be blessed themselves; for to that sense the first words may be read; "If thou wilt return to me, then thou shalt be brought out of thy captivity into thy own land again, as was of old promised," Deut. iv. 29.—xxx. 2. Or, "Then thou shalt rest in me, shalt return to me as thy rest, even while thou art in the land of thy captivity." (2.) They shall be blessings to others; for their returning to God again will be a means of others turning to him, who never knew him. If thou wilt own the living Lord, then will thereby: 1. Their obedience, let them, to bless themselves in him, to place their happiness in his favour, and to think themselves happy in being brought to the fear of him. See Isa. lxxv. 16. They shall bless themselves in the God of truth, and not in false gods; shall do themselves the honour, and give themselves the satis-

faction, to join themselves to him; and then in him shall they glory, they shall make him their Glory, and shall please, may shall pride, themselves with the blessed change they have made. Those that part with their sins to return to God, however they scriped the bargain at first, when they go away, then they boast.

3. For thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow-ground, and sow not among thorns.

4. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

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

vent the desolating judgments that were ready to break in upon them. Observe,

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

(1.) They must do by their hearts as they do by 

their ground that they expect any good of; they 

must, Breach up your fallow-ground. Plough to yourselves a ploughing, or

"Plough up your plough-ground, that you were not among thorns, that you may not labour in vain, for

your own safety and welfare, as those do that sow 

good seed among thorns, and as you have been doing a great while. Put yourselves into a frame fit to receive mercy from God, and put away all that which keeps it from you, and then you may expect to receive mercy, and to prosper in your endeavours to help yourselves." Note. [1.] An unconfounded, unhumbled heart is like fallow-ground, ground tillled, unoccupied. It is ground capable of improve-

ment; it is our ground, let out to us, and we must be accountable for it; but it is fallow; it is unfenced, and lies common, it is unfruitful, and of no advantage to the owner, and (which is principally intended) it is overgrown with thorns and weeds, which the more prevents the corrupt heart, if it be not renewed with grace. Rain in the dry season inns to the earth lost upon it, Heb. vi. 7, 8. [2.] We are concerned to get this fallow-ground ploughed up; we must search into our own hearts, let the word of God divide (as the plough does) between the joints and the marrow, Heb. iv. 12. We must rend our hearts, Joel ii. 13. We must pluck up by the roots those corruptions, which, as thorns, choke both our en-

avourings and expectations, Hos. x. 12.

(2.) They must do that to their souls, which was done to their bodies when they were taken into the covenant with God; (v. 4.) "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskin of your heart. Mortify the flesh and the lusts of it. Pare off that superfluity of naughtiness, which hinder your receiving with meekness the engraved word, " 3. A new way of, and rest not in, the circumsicion of the body, for that is but a sign, and will not serve without the thing signified. It is a dedicating sign. Do that in sincerity, which was done in profane by your circumcision; devote and consecrate yourselves unto the Lord, to be to him a peculiar people." Circumcision is an obligation to keep the law; lay yourselves afresh under that obliga-

tion. It is a seal of the righteousness of faith, lay hold then of that righteousness, and so circumcise yourselves to the Lord.

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

fied by his grace.

3. Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say. Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defended cities. 6. Set up the standard to-

ward Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction.

7. The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way: he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate: and thy cities shall be laid waste without an inhabitant. 8. For this
gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl; for the fierce anger of the Lord is not turned back from us. 9. And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the Lord, that the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder. 10. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul. 11. At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem, A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse. 12. Even a full wind from those places shall come unto me: now also will I give sentence against them. 13. Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Wo unto us! for we are spoiled. 14. O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee! 15. For a voice declareth from Dan, and publisheth affliction from mount Ephraim. 16. Make ye mention to the nations: behold, publish against Jerusalem, that watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah. 17. As keepers of a field are they against her round about; because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the Lord. 18. Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thy heart.

God's usual method is, to warn before he wounds. In these verses, accordingly, God gives notice to the Jews of the general destruction that would shortly be brought upon them by a foreign invasion. This must be declared and published in all the cities of Judah, and streets of Jerusalem, that all might hear and fear, and by this loud alarm be either brought to repentance, or left inexcusable. The prediction of this calamity is here given very largely, and in lively expressions, which one would think should have awakened and affected the most stupid. Observe, 1. The war proclaimed, and general notice given of the advance of the enemy. It is published now, some years before, by the prophet; but since this will be slighted, it shall be published after another manner, when the judgment is actually breaking in, v. 5, 6. The trumpet must be blown, the standard must be set up, a summons must be issued out to the people, to gather together, and to draw toward Zion, either to guard it, or expecting to be guarded by it. There must be a general rendezvous, the militia must be raised, and all the forces mustered. Those that are able men, and fit for service, must go into the defended cities, to garrison them; those that are weak, and would lessen their provisions, but not increase their strength, must retire, and not stay. 11. An express arrive with intelligence of the approach of the king of Babylon and his army. It is an evil that God will bring from the north, as he saith, ch. i. 15. even a great destruction, beyond all that has been done upon this nation of the Jews. The enemy is here compared, 1. To a lion that comes up from his thicket, when he is hungry, to seek his prey, v. 7. The helpless beasts are so terrified with his raving, (as some report,) that they cannot flee from him, and so become an easy prey to him. Nebuchadnezzar is this roaring, hungry lion, the king of the nations, that has laid many countries waste, and now sets his way on full speed toward the land of Judah. The destroyer of the Gentiles shall be the destroyer of the Jews too, when they have by their idolatry made themselves like the Gentiles. He is gone forth from his place, from Babylon, or the place of the rendezvous of his army, on purpose against this land; that is the prey he has now his eye upon, not to plunder it only, but to make it desolate, and herein he shall succeed to that degree, that the cities shall be laid waste, without inhabitants, shall be overgrown with grass as a field; so some read it. 2. To a drying, blasting wind, (v. 11.) a parching, scorching wind, which spoils the fruits of the earth, and withers them. Not a wind which brings rain, but which comes out of the north, drives away rain, (Prov. xxv. 23.) but brings something worse instead of it, such shall this evil out of the north be to this people; a black freezing wind, which they can neither fence against, nor flee from, but, wherever they go, it shall surround and pursue them; and they cannot see it before it comes, but, when it comes, they shall feel it. It is a wind of the high places in the wilderness, or wind, that beats upon the tops of the hills, or that carries all before it in the plain, where there is no shelter, but the ground is all champaign. It shall come in its full force toward the daughters of my people, that have been brought up so tenderly and delicately, that they could not endure to have the wind blow upon them. Now this fierce wind shall come against them, not to fan, or cleanse them, but such a gentle wind as is used in winnowing corn, but a full wind, (v. 12.) a strong and violent wind, blowing full upon them; this shall come to me, or rather for me, it shall come with commission from God, and shall accomplish that for which he sends it; for this, as other stormy winds, fulfill his word. 3. To clouds and whirlwinds for swiftness, v. 15. The Chaldean army is compared to clouds driven with the wind; so thick shall they stand, so fast shall they march, and it shall be to no purpose to offer to stop them, or to make head against them, any more than to arrest a cloud, or give check to a whirlwind. The horses are swifter than eagles when they fly upon their prey; it is in vain to think either of opposing them, or of outrunning them. 4. To earth and dust that the earth may receive him. The earth and dust shall come and the earth and dust that the earth may receive him, to show that it was not with a view to destroy, but to recover, that he came from the north, to carry them to Babylon, and to recover them from Babylon. 5. The voice declares from Dan, a city which lay farthest north of all the cities of Canaan, and therefore received the first tidings of this evil from the north, and hastened it to mount Ephraim, that part of the land of Israel which lay next to Judaea; they received the news of the afflication, and transmitted it to Jerusalem. Ill news by air space: and an impotent people, that have no hope of preventing it, may expect no other than ill news. Now, what is this news? Tell the nations, those mixed nations that now inhabit the cities of the ten tribes, mention it to them, that they may provide for their own safety: but publish it against Jerusalem, that is the place aimed at, the game shot at; let them know that they shall have the care of the city, and that all who will watch all opportunities to do mischief. Private soldiers we call private soldiers, or watchmen. They are coming in full career, and give out they
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V. the cities of Judah; they design to invest them, to make themselves masters of them, and to attack them with loud shouts, as sure of victory. As keepers of a field surround it, to keep all off from it, so shall they surround the enemy daily, keep all in them, till they be constrained to surrender at discretion; they are against her round about, compassing her on every side. See Luke xix. 43. As formerly the good angels, those watchers and holy ones, were like keepers of a field to Jerusalem, watching about it, that nothing might go an, to its prejudice; so now their enemies were as watchers and keepers of a field surrounding it, that nothing might go an, to its prejudice.

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

IV. The lamentable effects of this judgment, upon the first alarm given of it. 1. The people that should fight shall quite despair, and shall not have a heart to make the least stand against the enemy; (v. 8.) "For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl; you will do so, when the cry is made through the kingdom, Arm, arm; all will be seized with a consternation, and all put into confusion; instead of girding on the sword, they will gird on the sackcloth; instead of animating one another to a vigorous resistance, they will law not and howl, and so dispirit one another. While the enemy is yet at a distance, they will give up all for gone, and cry, Wo unto us, for we are spoiled, v. 13. We are all undone, the spoilers will certainly carry the day, and it is in vain to make head against them." Judah and Jerusalem had been famed for valiant men; but see what is the effect of sin, by depriving men of their confidence toward God, it deprives them of their courage toward men. 2. Their great number and vigour, as well as the public safety, shall be at their wit's end; (v. 9.) At that day, the heart of the king shall perish, both his wisdom and his courage; despairsing of success, he shall have no spirit to do any thing, and, if he had, he will not know what to do. His princes and privy-council, who should animate and advise him, shall be as much at a loss, and as much in despair, as he. See how easily, how effectually, God can bring ruin upon a people that are doomed to it, merely by dispiriting them, taking away the heart of the chief of them, (Job xii. 20, 24.) cutting off the head of princes, Ps. lxxxvi. 12. The business of the priests was to encourage the people in the time of war; they were to say to the people, Fear not, and let not your hearts faint, Dent. xx. 3. They were to blow the trumpets, for an assurance to them that in the day of battle they should be remembered before the Lord their God, Num. x. 9. But now the priests themselves shall be astonished, and shall have no heart themselves to do their office, and therefore shall not be likely to put spirit into the people. The prophets too, the false prophets, who had cried peace to them, shall be put into the greatest amazement imaginable, seeing their own guilty blood ready to be shed by that sword which they had often told the people there was no danger of. Nete, God's judgments come with the greatest terror upon those that have been most secure. Our Saviour foretells that at the last destruction of Jerusalem men's hearts shall fail them for fear, Luke xxi. 26. And it is common for those who have cheated and flattered people into a carnal security, not only to fail them, but to discourage them when the trouble comes.

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

VI. The prophet's endeavour to undeceive them; when the prophets they loved and feared dealt falsely with them, he when they had heard and perswaded doth Edition.
1. He shows them their wound; they were loath to see it, very loath to have it searched into; but if they will allow themselves the liberty of a free thought, they might discover their punishment in their sin; (v. 18.) "This is thy wickedness, because it is bitter,"—Now thou seest that it is a bitter thing to depart from God, and will certainly be bitterness in the latter end; (ch. ii. 19.) for it is the custom of truth to reach the heart, to the quick, and in the most tender part; the sword reaches to the soul," v. 10. God can make trouble reach the heart even of those that would lay nothing to heart. And by this thou mayest see what is thy wickedness, that it is a bitter thing, a root of bitterness, that bears gall and wormwood, and that it has reached to the heart; for the concern of the imagination of the heart is a thing that is more inward than inwardness.

If the heart were not polluted with sin, it would not be disturbed and disquieted as it is with trouble.

2. He shows them the cure, v. 14. Since thy wickedness reaches to the heart, there the application must be made; O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. By Jerusalem he means each one of the inhabitants of Jerusalem has a heart of his own to take care of, and it is personal reformation that must help the public. Every one must return from his own evil way, and in order to that, cleanse his own evil heart. And let the heart of the city too be purified, not the suburbs only, the out-skirts of it; the vitals of a state must be amended by the reformation of the heads that have the command over it upon. Note, (1.) Reformation is absolutely necessary to salvation; there is no other way of preventing judgments, or turning them away, when we are threatened with them, but taking away the sin by which we have procured them to ourselves. (2.) No reformation is saving, but that which reaches the heart. There is heart-wickedness that is detesting to the soul, from which we must wash ourselves. By repentance and faith we must wash our hearts from the guilt we have contracted by spiritual wickedness, by those sins which begin and end in the heart, and go no further: and by mortification and watchfulness we must suppress and prevent this heart-wickedness for the future. The tree must be made good, else the fruit will not. Jerusalem was all overspread with the leprous sin; she had sin so deep rooted with sin that when it affected the body; when afflicted with leprous, that external applications will do no good, unless physic be taken inwardly to carry off the humours that lurk there, and to change the mass of the blood, so it is with the soul, so it is with the state, there will be no effectual reformation of manners, without a reformation of the mind, the mistakes there must be rectified, the corruptions there must be mortified, and the evil dispositions there changed. "Though thou art Jerusalem, called a holy city, that will not save thee, unless thou wash thine heart from wickedness." In the latter part of the verse he reasons with them, How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? He complains here, [1.] Of the delays of their reformation; "How long shall that filthy heart of thine continue thine? when shall it cease?" Note, The God of heaven thinks the time long that his room is usurped, and his interest opposed, in our souls, ch. xiii. 27. [2.] Of the root of their corruption; the vain thoughts that lodged within them, and defiled their hearts, from which they must wash their hearts. Thoughts of iniquity or mischief, those bitter evil thoughts that are rooted in the evil heart, from which all other wickedness is produced, Matt. xv. 19. These are our own, the conceptions of our own lusts, (Jam. i. 15.) and they are most dangerous when they lodge within us, when they are admitted and entertained as guests, and are suffered to continue. Some read it thoughts of affliction, such thoughts as will bring nothing but affliction and misery. Some by the vain thoughts here understand all those frivolous pleas and excuses with which they turned off the reproves and calls of the world, and rendered them ineffectual, and bolstered themselves up in their wickedness. Wash thy heart from wickedness, and think not to say, We are not polluted, (ch. ii. 22.) or, "We are Jerusalem, we have Abraham to our father," Matt. iii. 8, 9.

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

The prophet is here in agony, and cries cut like one upon the rack of pain with some acute distem
per, or as a woman in travail. The expressions are very pathetic and moving, enough to melt a heart of stone into compassion, My bowels, my bowels, I am pained at my very heart; and yet well, and in heart himself, and nothing ails him. Note, A good man in such a bad world as this, cannot but be a man of sorrows. My heart makes a noise in the midst of me, through the tumult of my thoughts; and I cannot but speak of my peace. Note, The grievance and the grief sometimes may be such, that the most prudent, patient man cannot forbear complaining.

Now, what is the matter? What is it that puts this good man into such agitation? It is not for himself, or any affliction in his family, that he grieves thus; but it is purely upon the public account, it is his business, and his last days are spent in a state of distress for the public weal, and in a public spirit. 1. They are very sinful, and will not be reformed, v. 22. These are the words of God himself, for so the prophet chose to give this character of the people, rather than in his own words, or as from himself; My people are foolish. God calls them his people, though they are foolish. They have cast him off; but he has not cast them off, Rom. xi. 1. "O my people, what ailes you? they have for- nant with, and call me a rock in mercy for store. They are foolish, for they have not known me." Note, Those are foolish indeed, that have not known God; especially that call themselves his people, and have the advantages of coming into acquaintance with him, and yet have not known him. They are sottish children, stupid and senseless, and have no under- standing. They cannot distinguish between truth and error; they cannot discern the mind of God, either in his word or in his provi- dence; they do not understand what their true interest is, nor on which side it lies. They are wise to do evil, to plot mischief against the quiet in the land, wise to contrive the gratification of their lusts, and then to conceal and palliate them. But to do good they have no knowledge, no contrivance, no application of good; they know not how to make a good use either of the ordinances or of the provi- dences of God, nor how to bring about any design for the good of their country. Contrary to this, should be our character; (Rom. xvi. 19.) I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

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

Now let us see what there is in the destruction here foreseen and foretold, that is so very affecting. (1.) It is a swift and sudden destruction; it comes upon Judah and Jerusalem, and mysteriously pours in so fast upon them, that they have not the lost breathing-time. They have no time to recol- lect their thoughts, much less to recruit or recover their strength; Destruction upon destruction is cried, (v. 20.) breach upon breach, one sad calamity, like Job's messengers, treading upon the heels of another. The death of Josiah breaks the ice, and plucks up the flood-gates; within three months after that, his son and successor Jehoashah is deposed by the king of Egypt; within two or three years after, Nebu- chadnezzar, the Chaldean, enters into Judah, and thenceforward he was continually making devastations upon the land of Judah with his armies during the reigns of Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah, till about nineteen years after he completed their ruin in the destruction of Jerusalem: but suddenly were their tents spoiled, and their curtains in a moment. Though the cities held out for some time, the com- munion of the land was taken: the very first: the shepherds, and all that lived in tents, were plucked up ...
nighly; {v. 26} so formidable were the appearances of God against his people, as in the days of old they had seen those who had been deceptions and the little hills like lions, Ps. cxiv. 4.

The everlasting mountains seemed to be scattered, Hab. iii. 6. The mountains on which they had worshipped their idols, the mountains over which they had looked for succours, all trembled, as if they had been conscious of the people's guilt. The mountains, those among them that seemed to be highest and most inexorable, were about to fall at the approach of the Chaldean army. The hills moved lightly, as being eased of the burthen of a sinful nation, Isa. i. 24. {v. 44} Not the earth only, but the air, was dispeopled, and left uninhabited; {v. 25} I beheld the cities, the countries that used to be populous, and lo, there was no man to be seen; all the inhabitants were either killed, or fled, or taken captive, such a ruin, depopulating thing is surely, even the birds of the heavens, that used to fly about, and sing among the branches, were now fled away, and no more to be seen or heard. The land of Judah is now become like the lake of Sodom, over which (they say) no bird flies; see Deut. xxix. 23.

The enemies shall make such havoc of the country, that they shall not so much as leave a bird alive in it. {v. 27} Both the groves and the laid waste; {v. 26} Lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, being deserted by the inhabitants that should cultivate it, and then soon overgrown with thorns and briars; or, being trodden down by the destroying army of the enemy. The cities also and their gates and walls are broken down, and levelled with the ground. Those that look no further than second causes, impute it to the policy and fury of the invaders: but the prophet, who looked to the first Cause, says that it is at the presence of the Lord, at his face, the anger of his countenance, even by his fierce anger, that this was done. Even angry men cannot do us any real hurt, unless God be angry with us. If our ways please him, all is well. 

[6.] The meaning of all this is, that the nation shall be entirely ruined, and every part of it shall share in the destruction; neither town nor country shall escape. First, Not the country, for the whole land shall be desolate, corn-land and pasture-land, both common and enclosed, it shall all be laid waste, {v. 27} the conquerors will have occasion for it all. Secondly, Not the men, for {v. 29} the whole city shall flee, all the inhabitants of the town shall quit this town, both men and women; rather than lie exposed to their fury, they shall go into the thickets, where they are in danger of being torn by briars, nay, to be torn in pieces by wild beasts; and they shall climb up upon the rocks, where their lodging will be hard and cold, and the precipice dangerous. Let us not be overload of our houses and cities; for the time may come, when rocks and thickets may be preferable, and chosen rather. This shall be the common case, for every city shall be forsaken, and not a man shall be left, that dares dwell therein. Both government and trade shall be at an end, and all civil societies and incorporations dissolved. It is a very dismal picture which gives of the approaching desolation; but in the midst of all these threatening comes in other rocks and thickets may be preferable, and a full end; not a total consumption, for God will reserve a remnant to himself, that shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, not a final consumption, for Jerusalem shall again be built, and the land inhabited. This comes in here, in the midst of the threatenings, for the comfort of those that trembled at God's voice; and it speaks to us the changeableness of God's providence; as it breaks down, so it rises up again; every end of our comforts is not a full end, however we may be ready to think it so; and it speaks the unchangeableness of God's covenant, which stands so firm, that though he may direct it severely, yet he will not cast them off, ch. xxx. 11.

{v. 44} Their case was helpless, and without remedy. [1.] God would not help them; so he tells them plainly, v. 28. And if the Lord do not help them, who can? This is that which makes their case deplorable; for this the earth mourns, and the heavens above are black; there are no prospects but what is worst. [2.] They have spoken, and given the word which shall not be called back, I have purposed it, it is a consumption decreed, determined, and I will not repent, and not change this way, but proceed in it, and will not turn back from it. They would not repent, and turn back from the way of their sins, (ch. ii. 5.) and therefore God will not repent, and turn back from the way of his judgements. [3.] They could not help themselves, v. 30, 31. When the thing appeared at a distance, they flattered themselves with hopes that though God should not appear for them as he had done for Hezekiah against the Assyrian army, yet they should find some means or other to secure themselves, and give check to the forces of the enemy. But the prophet tells them, that when it comes to the issue, it will be quite different. For if thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? What course wilt thou take? Sit down now, and consider this in time. He assures them that, whatever were now their contrivances and confidences, First, They will then be despised by their allies whom they depended upon for assistance. He had often compared the sin of Jerusalem to whoredom, not only her idolatry, but her trust in creatures, in the neighbouring powers. Now he tells them to prepare her to a harlot abandoned by all the levantines that used to make court to her. She is supposed to do all she can to keep up her interest in their affections; she does what she can to make herself appear considerable among the nations, and a valuable ally; she complements them by her ambassadors to the highest degree, to engage them to stand by her now in her distress; she clothes herself with ornaments of gold, as if she were rich, and decks herself with ornaments of gold, as if her treasures were still as full as ever they had been; she rents her face with painting, puts the best colours she can upon her present distresses, and does her utmost to palliate and extenuate her losses, sets a good face upon them. But this policy and intrigue, which is painted for the face of the present, really rents it; the flames of paint spoils the skin, cracks it, and makes it rough; so the case which by false colours has been made to appear better than really it was, when truth comes to light, will look so much the worse; "And after all, in wrath shall thou make thyself fair; all thy neighbours are sensible how thou art brought; the Chaldeans will strip thee of thy crimson and ornaments, and then thy confederates will not choose to be visible thee, and refuse to give thee any succour, but they will join with those that seek thy life, that they may come in for a share in the prey of so rich a country." Here seems to be an allusion to the story of Jezebel, who thought, by making herself look fair and fine, to have outface her doom, but in vain, 2 Kings x. 1-34. And so it is with us; when we confide in them, how treacherous they are, instead of saving the life, they seek the life; they often change, so that they will sooner do us an ill turn, than any service. And see to how little purpose it is for these that have by sin deformed themselves in God's eyes, to think by any arts they can use to beautify themselves in the eye of the world.

Secondly, They will then be themselves in despair; they will find their troubles to be like the pains of a woman in travail, which she cannot es
cap. I have heard the voice of the daughter of Zion, her groans echoing to the triumphant shouts of the Chaldean army, which she heard, v. 15. It is like the voice of a woman in travail, whose pain is exquisite, and the fruit of sin and the curse too, (Gen. iii. 16.) and extorts lamentable outcries, especially of a woman in travail of her first child, who, having never known before what that pain is, is more stricken with it. The guilt of them is exceeding great, and he makes them hugely precious to these that have not been used to them. Zion, in this distress, since her neighbours refuse to pity her, bewails herself, fetching deep sighs; (so the word signifies) and she spreads her hands, either wringing them for grief, or reaching them forth for succour. All the cry is, Who is me now, (now that the decree is gone forth against her,) and is past recall.) for my soul is weary because of murderers; the Chaldean soldiers put all to the sword that gave them any opposition, so that the land was full of murderers. Zion was weary of hearing tragical stories from all parts of the country, and cried out, Who is me! It was well if their sufferings put them in mind of their sins, the murders committed upon them, of the murders committed by them; for God was so much incensed against the murder of the blood shed in Jerusalem, which the Lord would not pardon, 2 Kings xxiv. 4. Note, As sin will find out the sinner, so sorrow will sooner or later, find out the secure.

CHAP. V.

Reproofs for sin and threatenings of judgment are intermixed in this chapter, and are set the one over against the other. Judgments are threatening, that the reproves of sin might be the more effectual to bring them to repentance; sin is discovered, that God might be justified in the judgments threatened. 1. The sins they are charged with, are high, impiety in religion, (v. 1.) Inconsistencies, (v. 3.) The corruption and debauchery of both poor and rich, (v. 4, 5.) Idolatry and adultery, (v. 7, 8.) Treacherous departures from God, (v. 11.) An impudent defiance of him, (v. 12, 13.) And that whole, with a particular threat, at the bottom of all this, Want of the fear of God, notwithstanding the frequent calls given them to fear him, v. 20, 21. In the close of the chapter, they are charged with violence and oppression, (v. 25, 26.) and a combination of those to debase the nation, who should have been active to reform it, v. 30, 31. II. The judgments they are threatened with are very terrible. In general, the whole land shall be consumed, (v. 3.) the very earth that they stand upon, shall be burnt up upon them; (v. 15, 17.) shall set guards upon them; (v. 6.) shall destroy their fortifications; (v. 10.) shall carry them away into captivity; (v. 18.) and keep all good things from them, v. 25. Here, in the words of God's prophets shall be fulfilled, v. 14. But, III. Here is an intimation twice given that God would in the midst of wrath remember mercy, and not utterly destroy them, v. 10, 18. This was the scope and point of Jeremiah's preaching, in the latter end of Josiah's reign, and the beginning of Jehoiakim's: but the success of it did not answer expectation.

1. RUN ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it. And though they say, The Lord liveth, surely they swear falsely. 3. O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thon hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return. 4. Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God. 5. I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them: for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, and hurst the bounds. 6. Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces; because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased. 7. How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. 8. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife. 9. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

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

But it might be said, "What do you make of those in Jerusalem that continue to make pretences of religiousness in a relation to God? Are not they then for whose sakes Jerusalem may be spared?" No, for they are not sincere in their profession; (v. 2.) They say, The Lord liveth, and will swear by his name only, but they swear falsely. 1. They are not sincere in the profession they make of respect to God, but are false to him; they honour him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. 2. Though they appeal to God only, they make no conscience of calling him to witness to a lie. Through
They do not swear by idols, they forewarn themselves, which is no less an affront to God, as the <i>act of truth</i>, than the other is as the only true God.

II. A complaint which the prophet makes to God of the obstinacy and wilfulness of these people. God had appealed to their eyes; (v. 1) but here the prophet appeals to his eyes; (v. 3) "Are not thine eyes upon the truth? Dost thou not see every man's character? And is not this the truth of their case? They have not greedied for the affliction; they have been as stocks and stones under it, much less have they grizzled for the sin by which they have brought it upon themselves. Thou hast gone further yet, hast consumed them, hast corrected them yet more severely; but they have refused to receive correction, to accommodate themselves to thy design in correcting them, and to answer to it. They would not receive instruction by the correction. They have set themselves to <i>offend</i> the divine sovereign, and to have a share in the execution of it, for they have made their faces harder than a rock; they cannot change countenance, neither blush for shame, nor look pale for fear, cannot be beaten back from the pursuit of their lusts, whatever check is given them; for though often called to it, they have refused to return, and would go forward, right or wrong, as the horse into the battle."

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

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

2. The rich were insolent and haughty, and therefore they were wicked; (v. 5) "I will get me to the great men, and see if I can find them more pliable to the word and providence of God; I will speak to them of the</i> way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God, yet they are too stiff to stoop to his government: These have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds. They know their Master's will, but are resolved to have their own will, to walk in the name of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes. They think themselves too good to be controlled, too big to be corrected, even by the sovereign Lord of all himself.

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They are for breaking even his hands in sunder, Ps. l. 5. The poor are weak, the rich are wold, and so neither is there judgment.

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

1. Their spiritual whoredom, giving that honour to idols, which is due to God only; (v. 7) "Thou children have forsaken me, to whom they were born and dedicated, and under whom they have been brought up, and they have sworn by them that are no gods, have made their appeals to them as if they had been omnipotent, and their proper judges." This is here put for all acts of religious worship due to God only, but with which they had honoured their idols. They have sworn to them, (so it may be read,) have joined themselves to them, and covenanted with them. That foresake God make a bad change for those that are no gods.

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

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

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

2. An appeal to themselves concerning the equity of it; (v. 9) "Shall I not visit these things? Can you yourselves think that the God whose name is Jachin, will let such idolatries go unpunished,
or that a God of infinite purity will converse at such abominable uncleanness?" These are things that must be reckoned for, else the honour of God's government cannot be maintained, nor his laws saved from contempt; but sinners will be tempted to think him altogether such a one as themselves, contrary to that conviction of their own consciences concerning the judgment of God, which is necessary to be supported. That they which do such things are worthy of death, Rom. i. 32. Observe, When God punishes sin, he is said to visit for it, or inquire into it; for he weighs the cause before he passeth sentence. Sinners have reason to expect punishment, upon the account of God's holiness; to which sin is highly offensive, as well as upon the account of his justice, to which it renders us obnoxious; this is intimated in that, Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? It is not only the word of God, but his soul, that takes vengeance. And he has national judgments wherewith to take vengeance for national sins. Such nations as this was cannot long go unpunished. How shall I pardon thee for this? v. 7. Not but that those who have been guilty of these sins, have found mercy with God, as to their eternal estate; (Manasseh himself did, though so much necessary to the inquiry of those things;) but nations, as such, being rewardable and punishable only in this life, it would not be for the glory of God to let a nation so very wicked as this pass without some manifest tokens of his displeasure. 10. Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord's. 11. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the Lord. 12. They have belied the Lord, and said, It is not he, neither shall evil come upon us, neither shall we see sword nor famine; 13. And the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them. 14. Wherefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make your words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them. 15. Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the Lord: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say. 16. Their quiver is as an open sepulchre, they are all mighty men. 17. And they shall eat up thy harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thy herds; they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig-trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword. 18. Nevertheless in those days, saith the Lord, I will not make a full end with you. 19. And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, Wherefore doth the Lord our God all these things unto us? then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land; so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours. We may observe in these verses, as before, 1. The sin of this people, upon which the commission signed against them is grounded. God disowns them, and dooms them to destruction, v. 10. But is there not a cause? Yes; for, 1. They have dereried the law of God, v. 11. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against one another, yet both agreed to deal very treacherously against God. They forsake the worship of him, and therein violated their covenants with him; they revolted from him, and played the hypocrite with him. 2. They have defied the judgments of God, and given the lie to his threatenings in the mouth of his prophets, v. 12, 13. They were often told that evil would overtake them; and they must expect some desolating judgments, sword and famine: but they were secure, and said, We shall have peace, though we go on. For, (1.) They did not fear what God is; they belted him, and confered the dictates even of national light concerning him, for they said, "It is not he, he is not such a one as we have been made to believe he is; he does not see, or not right, and therefore no evil shall come upon us." Multitudes are minded by being made to believe that God will not be so strict with them as his word says he will; nay, by this artifice Satan undid us all; Ye shall not surely die. So here, Neither shall we see sword nor famine. Vain hopes of impurity are the deceitful support of all impurity. (2.) They did not fear what God said. The prophets gave them fair warning, but they turned it off with a jest; "They do but talk so, because it is their trade; they are words of course, and words are but wind. It is not the word of the Lord that is in them; it is only the language of their melancholy fancy, or their ill will to their country, because they are not preferred." Note, Impenitent sinners are not willing to own any thing to be the word of God, that makes against them; that tends either to part them from, or disquiet them in, their sins. They threaten the prophets; "They shall become wind, shall pass away unregarded, and thus shall it be done unto them, what they threaten against us we will inflict upon them. Do they frighten us with famine? Let them be fed with the bread of affliction." (So Micah was; 1 Kings xxvii.) Do they tell us of sword? Let them perish by the sword, ch. ii. 30. Thou, their mocking and misusing of God's messengers, filled the measure of their iniquity. II. The punishment of this people for their sin. 1. The threatenings they laughed at shall be executed; (v. 14.) Because ye speak this word of contempt concerning the prophets, and the word in their mouths, therefore God will put honour upon them and their words, yea, and not one iota or title of them shall fall to the ground, 1 Sam. iii. 19. Here God turns to the prophet Jeremiah, who had been thus bantered, and perhaps had been a little uneasy at it; Behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire. God owns them for his words, though men denied them, and will as surely make them to take effect as the fire consumes combustible matter that it touches; as the fire giveth light that it may be seen, and the wood which it consumeth, with the stones thereof. Sinners by sin make themselves fuel to that wrath of God, which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men in the scripture. The word of God will certainly be too hard for those that contend with it. They shall break, who will not bow before it. 2. The weapons they thought them to be in danger of, shall be brought upon them: God gives them their commission; (v. 19.) "Go up up above, her walls, mount them, trample upon them, tread
them down; walls of stone, before the divine commission, shall be but mud walls. Having made yourselves masters of the walls, you may destroy at pleasure; you may take all their battlements, and leave the fenced, fortified cities to lie open; for their battlements are not the Lord's, he does not own them, and therefore will not protect and fortify them. They were not erected in his fear, nor with a dependence upon him: the people have trusted to them more than to God, and therefore they are not his. When the city is filled with sin, God will be as the fire to the wood, and as the water to earth, as they are paper walls. What can defend us, when he who is our Defence, and the Defender of all our defences, is departed from us? Numb. xiv. 9. What is not of God, cannot stand, not stand long, nor stand us in any stead.

What dreadful work these invadors should make, is here described; (v. 15.) So, I will bring a nation upon you, O house of Israel. Note, God has all nations at his command, does what he pleases with them, and makes what use he pleases of them. And sometimes he is pleased to make the nations of the earth, the heathen nations, a scourge to the house of Israel, when that is become an hypocritical nation. This nation of the Chaldeans is here said to be a remote nation; it is brought upon them from afar, as the blindness and infirmity of the young man, and the longer stay, that they may pay themselves well for so long a march. It is a nation that thou hast had no commerce with, by reason of their distance, and therefore cannot expect to find favour with. God can bring trouble upon us from places and causes very remote. It is a mighty nation, that there is no making head against; an ancient nation, that value themselves upon their antiquity, and will therefore be the more haughty and imperious. It is a nation whose language thou knowest not; they speak the Syriac tongue, which the Jews at that time were not acquainted with, as appears, 2 Kings xviii. 26. The difference of language would make it the more difficult to treat with them of peace; compare this with the threatening, (Deut. xxviii. 49,) which it seems to have a reference to, for the law and the prophets exactly agree. They are well armed; Their quiver is an open sepulchre; their arrows shall fly so thick, hit so sure, and wound so deep, that they shall be reckoned to breathe nothing but death and slaughter; they are able-bodied, all effective, mighty men, v. 16. And when they have made themselves masters of the country, so that we shall have lost all for our family, and are reckoned all their own, that they can lay their hands on, v. 17. (1.) They shall strip the country, shall not only sustain, but surfeit, their soldiers with the rich products of this fruitful land. They shall not spare us, (then it might possibly have been retrieved,) but eat up, thine harvest in the field, and thy bread in the house, which thy sons and thy daughters eat. We cannot have, we have for our family, and it is comfort to see our sons and daughters eating that which we have taken care and pains for. But it is a grievous vexation to see it devoured by strangers and enemies; to see their camps victualled with our stores, while those that are dear to us are perishing for want of it; this also is according to the curse of the law; (Deut. xxviii. 34.) They shall be an astonishment and a terrour of which you hast taken sacrifices for thine idols; they shall not leave thee the fruit of thy vines and fig-trees." (2.) They shall starve the towns; They shall impoverish thy fenced cities, (and what fence is there against poverty, when it comes like an armed man?) those cities wherein thou trustedst to be a protection to the country. Note, It is just with God to impoverish that which we make our confidence. They shall impoverish them with the sword, cutting off all provisions from coming to them, and intercepting trade and commerce, which will impoverish even fenced cities. III. An intimation of the tender compassion God has yet for them, and the enemy is commissioned to destroy and lay waste, but must not make a full end, v. 10. Though they make a great slaughter, yet some must be left to live; though they make a great spoil, yet something must be left to live upon, for God has said it, (v. 18.) with a non obstante—a nevertheless, to the present desolation; Even in those days, in the time of this calamity, and of this, I will make a full end with you; and if God said it, the enemy shall not. God has mercy in store for this people, and therefore will set bounds to this desolating judgment; hitherto it shall come, and no further.

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

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

The prophet, having reproved them for sin, and threatened the judgments of God against them, is here sent to them again upon another errand, which
he must publish in Judah: the purport of it is to persuade them to fear God, which would be an effectual principle of their reformation, as the want of that fear had been at the bottom of their apostasy.

1. He complains of the shameful stupidity of this people, and their bent to backslide from God; speaking as if he knew not what course to take with them. (Deut. iv. 6.) Yet really they are a foolish people, and without understanding. Note, We cannot judge of men by the advantages and opportunities they enjoy; there are those that sit in darkness in a land of light, that live in sin even in a holy land, that are bad in the best places.

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

11. He ascribed this to the want of the fear of God. When he observes them to be without understanding, he asks, "Fear ye not me, saith the Lord, and will ye not tremble at my presence?" v. 22. If you would but keep up an awe of God, you would be more observant of what he says to you; and did you but understand yourselves better, you would be more under the commanding rule of God's fear. When he observes that they are revolting and gone, he adds this, as the root and cause of their apostasy. (v. 24.) Aggi he says, "Fear ye not me; saith the Lord; and will ye not tremble at my presence?"

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

1. We must fear the Lord and his greatness; (v. 22.) upon this account he demands our fear: Shall we not tremble at his presence, and be afraid of trampling on him, or trilling with him, who in the kingdom of nature and providence gives such incontestable proofs of his power? Are we never so much surprised at his astonishing mercies, and do we never so much admire and divide the secret of them? Here is one instance given of very many that might be given; he keeps the sea within compasss: though the tides flow with a mighty strength, twice every day, and if they should flow on awhile, would crown the world; though in a storm the billows rise high, and dash to the shore with incredible force and fury, yet they are under check, he restrains their rage; now is this the Lord's doing, and it would be marvellous, if it were not common, in our eyes. He has placed the sand for the bound of the sea, not only for a meastone, to mark our how far it may come, and where it must stop, but as a mound, or fence, to put a stop to it. A wall of sand shall be as effectual as a wall of brass to check the flowing waves, when God is pleased to make it so; nay, that is chosen rather to teach us that a soft answer like the soft sand, turns away wrath, and quiets a feasing rage, when grievous words, like hard rocks, do but exasperate, and make the waters cast forth so much the more mire and dirt. This bound is placed by a perpetual decree; by an ordinance of antiquity—so some read it, and then it sends us as far back as to the days of Noah; for then he made these words to be a bound between the sea and the dry land, and fixed marches between them, (Gen. i. 9, 10.) which is elegantly described, Ps. civ. 6, &c. and Job xxxviii. 8, &c. or to the period of Noah's flood, when God promised that he would never drown the world again, Gen. xi. 11. An ordinance of perpetuity—so our translation takes it. It is a perpetual decree, it has its effect all as far as the third, when God still threatens, that till day and night come to an end. This perpetual decree the waters of the sea cannot pass over or break through. Though the waves thereof toss themselves, as the troubled sea does when it cannot rest, yet can they not prevail; though they roar and rage as if they were vexed at the check given them, yet can they not pass over. Now this is a good reason why the Lord is to be feared, when God foretold, (1.) By this he would have us to fear that he is a God of almighty power, and universal sovereignty, and therefore to be feared and had in reverence. (2.) This shows us how easily he could drown the world again, and how much we continually lie at his mercy, and therefore we should be afraid of making him our Enemy. (3.) Even the unruly waves of the sea observe his decree, and retreat at his check; and shall not we? Why are our hearts revolting and rebellious, when the sea neither revolts nor rebels?

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

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

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

Here.

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

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

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

2. They were false and treacherous; (v. 27.) As
cage, or coop, is full of birds, and of food for
them to fatten them for the table, so are their houses
full of deceit, of wealth gotten by fraudulent prac-
tices, or of arts and methods of defrauding. All the
business of their flourishing was done with the lie,
whenever they dealt with them, they would cheat him if they
can; which is easily done by those who make no
conscience of what they say and do. Hence, they
overpass the deeds of the wicked, (v. 28.) These
that act by deceit, with a colour of law and justice, do
more mischief perhaps than these wicked men, (v. 26.) that carried all before them by open force.

3. They are become great in the world, they are
waxon rich, and thrive upon it. They have where-
withal to make provision for the flesh to full all the
lusts of it, to which they are very indulgent, so that
they are waxen fat with living at ease, and basking
themselves in all the delights of sense; they are
sleek and smooth; they shine, they look fair and
gay; every body admires them. And they pass by
the woe of others, as if it were not their own, yet
escape the evils which one would expect their
sins should bring upon them; they are not in trouble
as other men, much less as we might expect bad
men, Ps. lxxiii. 5, &c.

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

4. There was a general corruption of all orders
and degrees of men among them; (v. 30, 31.) A
wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the
land. The degeneracy of such a people, so privi-
leged and advanced, was a wonderful thing.
How could they be so base and weak their condition?
It was a horrible thing, and to be detected, and the consequences of it dreaded. To frighten ourselves
from sin, let us call it a horrible thing. What was
the matter? In short, this: [1.] The leaders mis-
led the people: The prophets prophesy falsely, coun-
terfeit a commission from heaven, when they are
factors for hell. Religion is never more dangerous
or mischievous than when it is most counterfeited for
sheds, or when those who are in it are highly
envyed. But why did not the priests, who had power in their hands for that purpose, restrain
these false prophets? Alas! instead of doing that,
they made use of them as the tools of their ambi-
tion and tyranny; they bare rule by their means;
they supported themselves in their grandeur and
wealth, their laziness and luxury, their impositions
and oppressions, by the help of the false prophets,
and their interest in the people. Thus they were in
a combination against every thing that was good, at

Jeremiah, with very wrath; if the priests and prophets will let them alone in their sins, they will give them no disturbance in theirs. They love to be ridden with a loose rein, and like those rulers very well who do their wills, and those teachers that will not reform them.

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

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

2. What the direct tendency of their wickedness was: What will you do in the end thereof? That is, (1.) What a pitch of wickedness will you come to at last? What will you do then that you do this? What will this avail you? You will certainly grow worse and worse, till you have filled up the measure of your iniquity. (2.) What a fate of destruction will you come to at last? When things are brought to such a pass as this, as nothing can be expected from you but a deluge of sin, so nothing can be expected from God but a deluge of wrath; and what will ye do when that comes? Note, Those that walk in bad ways, would do well to consider the tendency of them both to greater sin and utter ruin. An end will come, the end of a wicked life will come, when it will be all called over again, and without doubt will be bitterness in the latter end.

Chap. VI.

In this chapter, as before, we have, 1. A prophecy of the invading of the land of Judah, and the besieging of Jerusalem by the Chaldean army, (v. 1. 8.) with the spoils which they should make of the country, (v. 9.) and the terror which all should be seized with on that occasion, v. 22. 28. 11. An account of the sins of Judah and Jerusalem, which provoked God to bring this desolating judgment upon them. Their oppression; (v. 7.) their contempt of the word of God; (v. 10. 12.) their worldliness; (v. 13.) the treachery of their prophets; (v. 14.) their impudence in sin; (v. 15.) their obstinacy against reproofs, v. 18. 19. These made their sacrifices unacceptable to him, (v. 29.) and for these he gave them up to the sword, v. 30. He that provoketh to wrath and causeth to err, shall be reputed irreproachable, v. 28. 30. III. God counsellor given them in the midst of all this, but in vain, v. 8. 19. 17.

1. O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem, and blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Beth-haccerem: for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction. 2. I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman. 3. The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her: they shall pitch their tents against her round about; they shall feed every one in his place. 4. Prepare ye war against her; arise, and let us go up at noon. Wo unto us! for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out. 5. Arise, and let us go by night, and let us destroy her palaces. 6. For thus hath the Lord of hosts said, How ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem: this is the city to be visited: she is wholly oppression in the midst of her. 7. As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me continually is grief and wounds. 8. Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.

Here is,

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

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

2. That the attempt upon them should be bold and formidable, and such as they should be a very unequal match for. (1.) See what the daughter of Zion is, on whom the assault is made; she is likened to a comely and delicate woman, (v. 2.) bred up in every thing that is nice and soft, that will not set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground for terrors and delicacy, (Deut. xxxviii. 56.) nor suffer the wind to blow upon her; and, not being accustomed to hardships, she will be the less able either to resist the enemy, (for those that make war must endure hardness,) or to bear the destruction with
that patience which is necessary to make it tolerable. The more we indulge ourselves in the pleasures of the world, the more we increase the troubles of this life. (2.) See what the daughter of Babylon is, by whom the assault is made. The generals and their armies are compared to shepherds and their flocks; (v. 3.) in such numbers and in such order did they come, the soldiers following their leaders, as the sheep their shepherds. The daughter of Zion dwell at home, (so some read it,) compared to the common house, owned by none, pitch their tents in it, and their flocks quickly eat it bare; so shall the Chaldean army easily break in upon the land of Judah, force for themselves a free quarter where they please, and in a little time devour all.

For the further illustration of this, he shows,

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

[2.] How they shall animate themselves and one another to execute that commission. God's counsels being against Jerusalem, which cannot be altered or disannulled, the counsels of war which the enemies hold are made to agree with his counsels. God having said, Prepare ye war against her, their determinations are made subservient to his; and notwithstanding the distance of place, and the many difficulties that lie in the way, it is soon resolved ministry is speedily taken up, and they do as they wish. Note, It is good to see how the counsel and decree of God are pursued and executed in the devices and designs of men, even theirs that know him not, Isa. x. 6, 7. In this campaign, First, They resolved to be very expeditious. They have no sooner resolved upon it, than they address themselves to it; it shall never be said that they left any thing to be done towards it to-morrow, or that they could do it to-day. Arise, let us go up at noon, though it be in the heat of the day; may, (v. 5.) Arise, let us go up by night, though it be in the dark; nothing shall hinder them, they are resolved to lose no time. They are described as men in care to make despatch, (v. 4.) "We unto us, for the day goes away, and we are not going on with our work; the sun is rising, and it will be too late to go on with it," Isa. xxvii. 8-9. That is, it was thus easy to conquer the city, and the common men of the city might have been persuaded to yield, without resistance, and have submitted to the conquerors. But the princes and the priests, as long as they remained firm and continued resolute to maintain the city, the ruin of the city was inevitable. The Chaldeans went about the city, and fixed theirCampo against it, and it was in the night that they broke in upon it, and made a breach where none suspected it. Hence this is said to be a passage in the word of God; God prepared the breach, and made a breach for them to come in. This is a figure of speech, which signifies any person or thing that is against God, and is against the gospel, and, therefore, God shall make a breach for us to break into the city of Jerusalem, and shall open the way whereby we shall come in. Note, It is good to know that the kingdom of grace, or the kingdom of heaven, is given to such as are against it, and that God will make a breach for us to break into it.

II. The cause of this judgment assigned. It is all for their wickedness; they have brought it upon themselves; they must bear it, for they must bear the blame of it; they are thus oppressed; because they have been oppressors; they have dealt hardly with one another, each in their turns, as they have had power and advantage, and now the enemey shall deal with them, and they shall have nothing in return; as they oppressed, so are they now oppressed, and as they have been violent and oppressive, and violence, and wrong-doing, is here charged upon them, 1. As a national sin; (v. 6.) Therefore this city is to be visited, it is time to make inquisition, for she is wholly oppressed in the midst of her. All orders and degrees of men, from the prince on the throne to the meanest master of a shop, were oppressive to those that were under them. Look which way you will, there were causes for complaints of this kind. 2. As a sin that was become in a manner natural to them; (v. 7.) She casts out wickedness in all the instances of malice and mischiefonous, as a fountain casts out her waters, as plentifully and constantly; the streams bitter and poisonous, like the fountain. The waters out of the fountain will not be restrained, but will sweep over the whole country, and destroy all the plants of righteousness. It is fitly applied to the corrupt heart of man in his natural state; it casts out wickedness, one evil imagination or other, as a fountain casts out her waters, naturally and easily; it is always flowing, and yet always full. As that which was become a constant practice with them, Violence and spoil are heard in her. The cry of it is come up before God, as that of Sodom; Before me continually are grief and wounds—the complaint of those that find themselves aggrieved, being unjustly wounded in their bodies or spirits, in their estates or reputation. Note, He that is the common Parent of mankind, regards and rescinds, and sooner or later will revenge the miscarriages and wrongs that men do to one another.

III. The counsel given them, how to prevent this judgment. Fair warning is given, now upon the whole matter; Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem. v. 8. Receive the instruction given thee both by the law of God and by his prophets; be wise at length for thyself. They knew very well what they had been instructed to do; nothing remained but to do it, for till then they could not be instructed. The reason for this counsel is taken from the inevitable ruin they ran upon, if they refused to comply with the instructions given them; lest my soul depart, or be disjounced, from thee. This intimates what a tender affection and concern God had had for them; his very soul had been joined to them, and nothing but sin could disjoin it. Note, 1. The God of mercy this hath to depart even from a provoking people, yet is earnest with them, by true repentance and reformation to prevent things coming to that extremity. 2. Their case is very miserable from whom God's soul is disjounced; it intimates the loss not only of their outward blessings, but of those comforts and favours which are the more immediate and peculiar tokens of his love and presence. God's mercies are so precious, that it is a crime to be unworthy of them; and God, in his love and long-suffering, will not suffer his people to be unmindful of it, or to dishonour their privileges, and make ourselves masters of the wealth that is in them. It was not that they might

fulfil God's counsels, but that they might fill their own treasures, that they were thus eager; yet God freely spared them so long as they would hearken to him.

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

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

1. The ruin of Judah and Jerusalem is here threatened. We had before the haste which the Chaldean army made to the war; (v. 4, 5.) now here we have the hawke made by the wind. How lamentable are the desolations here described! The enemy shall so long quarter among them, and so insatiable in their thirst after blood and treasure, that they shall seize all they can meet with, and what escapes them one time, shall fall into their hands another; (v. 9.) They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel, as a vine, as the grape-gatherer, who, when he resolved to leave none behind, still turns back his hand into the baskets, to put more in, till he has gathered all; so shall they be picked up by the enemy, though dispersed, though hid, and none of them shall escape their eye and hand. Perhaps the people, being given to covetousness, (v. 15.) had not observed that law of God, which forbade them to glean all their grapes; (Lev. xix. 10.) and now they themselves shall be in like manner thoroughly gleaned, and shall either fall by the sword or go into captivity. This is explained, v. 11, 12. where God's fury and his hand are said to be poured out and stretched out, in the fury and by the hand of the Chaldeans; for even wicked men are often made use of as God's hand, (Ps. xvii. 14.) and in their anger we may see God angry. Now see on whom the fury is poured out in full phials; upon the children abroad, or in the streets, where they are playing; (Zech. viii. 5.) or whether they run out innocently to look about them; the sword of the Chaldean, and the enmity of God, (ch. ix. 21.) have procured. The execution shall likewise reach the assembly of young men, their merry meetings, their clubs which they keep up to strengthen one another's hands in wickedness, they shall be cut off together. Nor shall these only fall into the enemies' hands, who meet for lewdness and wickedness; for when the husband and the wife shall be taken, these two in bed together, and neither left, but both taken prisoners. And as they have no compassion for the weak but fair sex, so they have none for decrepit but venerable age; the old with the full of days, whose deaths can contribute no more to their safety than their lives to their service, who are not in a capacity to do them either good or harm, they shall be either cut off or carried off. Their houses shall then be turned to others, (v. 12.) the conquerors shall dwell in their habitations, use their goods, and live upon their stores; their fields and wives shall fall together into their hands as was threatened, Deut. xxviii. 30, 8c. For God stretches out his hand upon the inhabitants of the land, and none can go out of the reach of it.

Now as to this denunciation of God's wrath, 1. The prophet tells the people of Jerusalem, that God speaks terrifyingly, for herein he dealt faithfully; (v. 11.) "I am full of the fury of the Lord, full of the thoughts and apprehensions of it, and am carried out with a powerful impulse, by the spirit of prophecy, to speak of it thus vehemently." He took no delight in threatening, nor was it any pleasure to him with such sermons as these to make those about him uneasy; but he could not contain himself, he was uneasy with holding in; he suppressed it as long as he could, as long as he burst, but he was so full of hower by the spirit of the Lord of hosts, that he must speak, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. Note, When ministers preach the terrors of the Lord according to the scripture, we have no reason to be displeased at them; for they are but messengers, and must deliver their messages pleasing or unpleasing. 2. He condemns the false prophets, who preached plausibly, for therein they flattered people, and dealt unfaithfully, v. 13, 14. The priests and the prophet, who should be their watchmen and monitors, have dealt falsely, have not been true to their trust, nor told the people their faults and the danger they were in; they should have been their physicians, but they murdered their patients by letting them have their wills, and giving them every thing they had a mind to, and flattering them into an opinion that they were in no danger; (v. 14.) They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, or, according to the cure of some slight hurt; skimming over the wound, and never searching it to the bottom; applying lotions only, when they had no need of them, and giving them opiates, to make them easy for the present, while the disease was perying upon their vitals. They said, "Peace, peace, all shall be well." If there were some thinking people among them, who were awake, and apprehensive of danger, they soon stopped their mouths with their priestly and prophetic authority, boldly averring that there was no danger, when there is no peace, because they went on in their idolatries and daring impieties. Note, Those are to be reckoned our false friends, that is, our worst and most dangerous enemies, who flatter us in a sinful way.

II. The sin of Judah and Jerusalem is here dis
covered, which provoked God to bring this ruin upon them, and justified him in it.

1. They would by no means bear to be told of their faults, nor of the danger they were in. God bids the prophet give them warning of the judgment coming, v. 8. "But," says he, "to whom shall I speak, and give warnings?" I cannot find out any that will so much as give me a patient hearing. I may give warnings long enough, but there is nobody that will take warnings. I cannot speak, that they may hear, cannot speak to any purpose, or with any hope of success; for their ear is uncircumised, it is carnal and fleshly, indisposed to receive the voice of God, so that they cannot hearken. They love not God, nor will they keep sky-scraper warnings, so that divine things might as much purpose be spoken to a stone as to them. Nay, they are not only deaf to it, but prejudiced against it; therefore they cannot hear, because they are resolved that they will not." The word of the Lord is unto them a reproach. Both the reproves and the threatenings of the word are so; they reckon themselves wronged and affronted by both, and resent the prophet's plain-dealing with them, as they would the most causeless slander and calumny. This was kicking against the pricks, (Acts ix. 5,) as the lawyers against the word of Christ; (Luke xi. 45.) Thus saying, thou reproachest us also. Note, These reproves that are counted reproaches, and heard as such, are of great weight and power in the heaviest woes.

When it is here said, They have no delight in the word, more is implied than is expressed; they have an antipathy to it, their hearts rise at it; it exasperates them, and enrages their corruptions, and they are ready to fly in the face, and pull out the eyes, of their reprovers. And how can those expect that the word of the Lord should ever reach for them, who have no delight in it, but would rather be any where than within hearing of it?

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

3. They were become impudent in sin, and past shame. After such a high charge of flagrant crimes proved upon them, it was very proper to ask, (v. 15.) Were they ashamed, when they had committed all these abominations, which are such a reproach to their reason and religion? Did they blush at the conviction, and acknowledge that confusion of face belonged to them? If so, there is something like that real shame, that blush to be ashamed; but to appear so much as this colour of virtue among them; their hearts were so hardened, that they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush, they had so brazened their faces. They even gloried in their wickedness, and openly confronted the convictions which should have humbled them; and brought them to repentance. They resolved to follow their own inclinations, and go their own guilt. Some refer it to the priests and prophets, who had healed the people slightly, and told them that they should have peace, and yet were not ashamed of their treachery and falsehood, no, not when the event disproved them, and gave them the lie. Those that are shameless are graceless, and their case hopeless. But they that will not submit to a penitential shame, nor take that to themselves as their due, shall not escape an utter ruin; for so it follows, Therefore they shall fall among them that fall, they shall have their portion with those that are quite undone; and when God visits the nation in wrath, they shall be sure to be cast down, and be made to tremble, because they would not blush. Note, Those that sin, and cannot blush for it, shall find that it is bad with them now, and that it will be worse with them shortly. At first, they hardened themselves, and would not blush; afterward, they were so hardened, that they could not. Quod nonum habebant in malis bonum fortunant; perecendi verendum esse. They have lost the good they had, have lost many good ones, some many bad ones, that is, shame for having done amiss. Senec. de Vit. Benc.

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

1. By way of advice concerning their duty, v. 16. God had been used to say to them, Stand in the ways and see. That is, (1.) He would have them to consider, not to proceed rashly, but to do as travellers in the road, who are in care to find the right way which will bring them to their journey's end, and therefore pause and inquire for it. If they have any reason to think that they have missed their way, they are not easy till they have got satisfaction. (2) That might answer their restours, and comprehend the path of their feet, as those that believe lawful and unlawful are of no less consequence to us than the right way and the wrong are to a traveller! (2.) He would have them to consult antiquity, the observations and experiences of those that went before them; "Ask for the old paths; inquire of the former age;" (Job viii. 13.) ask the ancients, from the times of (Deut. xxxii. 7.) and thou wilt find that the way of godliness and righteousness has always been the way which God has owned and blessed, and in which men have prospered. Ask for the old paths, the paths prescribed by the law of God, the written word, that true standard of antiquity. Ask for the paths that the patriarchs travelled in before you, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and the promises made to them, tread in their steps. Ask for the old paths; Where is the good way? We must not be guided merely by antiquity, as if the plea of prescription and long usage were alone sufficient to justify our path; no, there is an old way which wicked men have trodden, Job xxii. 13. But when we ask for the old paths, it is only in order to find out the good way, the highway of the righteous. Note, The way of religion and godliness is a good old way; the way that all the saints in all ages have walked in. (3.) He would have them to resolve to act according to the result of these inquiries; "When you have found out which is the good way, walk therein; practice accordingly, keep close to that way, proceed and persevere in it. Some have been like this; but there were none of these faults, or the troubles, or the distresses, which in this case, between the true and false prophets, between those that said they should have peace, and those that told them trouble was at the door; they pretended they knew not which to believe; "Stand in the way," says God, "and see, and inquire, which of these two agrees with the written word, and the usual methods of God's providence, of his whole people, of his church; be of the right way, and do accordingly." (4.) He assures them, that if they do thus, it will secure the welfare and satisfaction of their own souls; "Walk in the good old way, and you will find that your walking in that way will be easy and pleasant; you will enjoy both your God and yourselves, and the way will lead you to true rest. Though it cost you some pains to walk..."
in that way, you will find an abundant recompense at your journey's end." (3.) He bemoans that this good counsel, which was so rational in itself, and so proper for them, could not find acceptance; "But they said, We will not walk therein. Not only will we not be at the pains to inquire which is the good way, the good old way; but when it is told us, and we have nothing to say to the contrary but that it is the right way; yet we will not make ourselves and our consciences as to walk in it." Thus ignorances are ruined far ever by downright wilfulness.

2. By way of admonition concerning their danger. Because they would not be ruled by fair reasoning, God takes another method with them; by lesser judgments he threatens greater, and sends his prophets to give them this explication of them, and to frighten them with an apprehension of the danger they were in; (Jer. 22, 19.) "Therefore I set watchmen over you. God's ministers are watchmen, and it is a great mercy to have them set over us in the Lord. Now observe here, (1.) The fair warning given by these watchmen. This was the burden of their song, they cried again and again, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. God, in his providence, sounds the trumpet; (Zech. ix. 14.) the watchmen here make mention of them, (Jer. 17.) and they are to call upon others to hearken to it; too, to hear the Lord's controversy, to observe the voice of Providence, to improve it, and answer the intentions of it. (2.) This fair warning slighted; "But they said, We will not hearken; we will not hear, we will not heed, we will not believe; the prophets may as well save themselves and us the trouble. The reason why sinners perish is, because they do not hearken to the sound of the trumpet; and the reason why they do not, is, because they will not; and they have no reason to give why they will not, but because they will not, that is, they are herein most unreasonable. One may more easily deal with ten men's reasons, than one man's will.

18. Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. 19. Hear, O earth; behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it. 20. To what purpose commeth there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country! your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me. 21. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will lay stumbling-blocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; the neighbour and his friend shall perish. 22. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth. 23. They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee. O daughter of Zion. 24. We have heard the fame thereof; our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, and pain as of a woman in travail. 25. Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for the sword of the enemy and fear is on every side. 26. O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning as for an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us. 27. I have set thee for a tower and a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way. 28. They are all grievous revolters, walking with slanders: they are brass and iron; they are all corrupters. 29. The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away. 30. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them.

Here,

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

II. God rejects their plea, by which they insisted upon their external services as sufficient to atone for all the sin. Alas! it is a frivolous plea (to 20.) "To what purpose came there to me incense, and sweet cane, to be burned for a perfume on the golden altar, though it was the best of the kind, and far-fetched? What care I for your burnt-offerings and your sacrifices?" They not only cannot profit God, (no sacrifice does, Ps. l. 9.) but they do not please him, for none does but the sacrifices of the upright; that of the wicked he will not accept. Sacrifice and incense were appointed to excite their repentance, and to direct them to a Mediator, and assist their faith in him. Where this good use was made of them, they were acceptable, God had respect to them and to those that offered them. But when they were offered with an opinion that thereby they made God their Debtor, and purchased a license to go on in sin, they were far from being pleasing to God, that they were a provocation to him.
III. He foretells the desolations that was now coming upon them. 1. God designs their ruin because they hate to be reformed; (v. 21.) I will lay stumbling-blocks before this people, occasions of falling, not into sin, but into trouble. Those whom God has marked for destruction he perplexes and embarrasses in their counsels, and obstructs and retards all the methods they take for their own safety. Their victories were often broken with which they went, wherever they went, were stumbling-blocks to them, in every corner they stumbled upon them, and were dashed to pieces by them; The fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; neither the fathers with their wisdom, nor the sons with their strength and courage, shall escape them, or get over them, The sons that sinned with their fathers, fall with them. Though the highest God hate his people, they may perish, and not be able to help either themselves or one another. 2. He will make use of the Chaldeans as instruments of it; for whoever work God has to do, he will find proper instruments for the doing of it. This is a people fetched from the north, from the sides of the earth. Babylon itself lay a great way off northward; and some of the conquerors that were subject to the king of Babylon, out of which his son has his farther. These must be employed in his service, v. 22, 23. For, (1.) It is a people very numerous, a great nation, which will make their invasion the more formidable. (2.) It is a warlike people; they lay hold on bow and spear, and at this time know how to use them, for they are used to them; they ride upon horses, and therefore they march the more swiftly, and in battle press the harder. No nation has been brought into the field a better cavalry than the Chaldeans. (3.) It is a barbarous people; they are cruel, and have no mercy, being greedy of prey, and flushed with victory. They take a pride in frightening all about them; their voice roars like the sea. And, lastly, They have a particular design upon Judah and Jerusalem, in hopes greatly to enrich themselves with the spoil of that famous country. They are set in array against thee, O daughter of Zion. The sins of God's professing people make them an easy prey to those that are God's enemies as well as theirs.

IV. He describes the very great consternation which Judah and Jerusalem should be in, upon the approach of this formidable enemy, v. 24—26. 1. They will be execrated; God has set his intelligence brought them of the approach of the enemy; "When we have but heard the name thereof, our hands melt feebly, and we have no heart to make any resistance; anguish has taken hold of us, and we are immediately in an extremity of pain, like that of a woman in travail." Note, Sense of guilt quite dispirits men, upon the approach of any thing that passes in the nature of guilt, and of the judgments which proceed from it. 2. They will be confounded by consent to their houses, not daring to show their heads abroad, for though they could not but expect that the sword of the enemy would at last find them out there, yet they would rather die tamely and meekly than run any venture, either by flight or flight, to help themselves. Then shall they hope to do for themselves, who have made God their Enemy? 3. They will be exposed by consent to their houses, not daring to show their heads abroad, for though they could not but expect that the sword of the enemy would at last find them out there, yet they would rather die tamely and meekly than run any venture, either by flight or flight, to help themselves. Then shall they hope to do for themselves, who have made God their Enemy? 4. They will be exposed by consent to their houses, not daring to show their heads abroad, for though they could not but expect that the sword of the enemy would at last find them out there, yet they would rather die tamely and meekly than run any venture, either by flight or flight, to help themselves. Then shall they hope to do for themselves, who have made God their Enemy? 5. They will be exposed by consent to their houses, not daring to show their heads abroad, for though they could not but expect that the sword of the enemy would at last find them out there, yet they would rather die tamely and meekly than run any venture, either by flight or flight, to help themselves. Then shall they hope to do for themselves, who have made God their Enemy?

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

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

2. That they would never be reclaimed and reformed; it was in vain to think of reducing them, for various methods had been tried with them, and all to no purpose, v. 29, 30. No one method that was expected to be productive of good in it, and was therefore put into the furnace by the refiner, who used all his art, and took abundance of pains, about it, but it proved all cross, nothing of any value could be extracted out of it. God by his prophets and by his providences had used the most proper means to refine this people, and to purify them from their wickedness, as it was in all in vain. The excellency of the word, and a series of afflictions, they had been kept in a constant fire, but all to no purpose. The belles have been still kept so near the fire, to blew it, that they are burnt
with the heat of it, or they are quite worn out with long use, and throw into the fire as good for nothing. The prophets have preached their threats sore with crying aloud against the sins of Israel, and yet they are not convinced and humbled. The lead, which was then used in refining silver, as quicksilver is now, is consumed of the fire, and has not done its work; for the founder melts in vain, his labour is lost, for the wicked are not plucked away, no care is taken to separate between the precious from the vile. The plenteous waters of the old hear, to cast out of communion those who, being corrupt themselves, are in danger of infecting others. Or, Their wickednesses are not removed, (so some read it,) they are still as bad as ever, and nothing will prevail to part between them and their sins; they will not be brought off from their idolatries and immorality by all they have heard, and all they have felt, of the wrath of God, and therefore their wickednesses are pressed upon them, v. 36. Reprobate silver shall they be called, useless and worthless; they glitter as if they had some silver in them, but there is nothing of real virtue or goodness to be found among them; and for this reason the Lord has rejected them. He will no more own them as his people, nor look for any good from them; he will take them away like dross, and separate them, and consume them with fire for those that would not be purifled by a refining fire. By this it appears, (1.) That God has no pleasure in the death and ruin of sinners, for he tries all ways and methods with them to prevent their destruction, and qualify them for salvation. Both his ordinances and his providences have a tendency this way, to part between them and their sins, and yet with all it is all lost labour; We have fished unto you, and you have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and you have not wept. Therefore, (2.) God will be justified in the death of sinners, and all the blame will lie upon themselves. He did not reject them till he had used all proper means to reduce them; did not cast them off so long as there was any hope of them, nor abandon them as dross till it appeared that they were reprobate silver.

CHAP. VII.

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

THE word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 2. Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say. Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord: 3. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. 4. Trust you not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these. 5. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; 6. If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: 7. Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever. 8. Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. 9. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; 10. And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? 11. Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord. 12. But go ye now unto my place, which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. 13. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; 14. Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. 15. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.

These verses begin another sermon, which is continued in this and the two following chapters; much to the same effect, with those before, to reason them to repentance. Observe, 1. The orders given to the prophet to preach this sermon; for he had not only a general commission, but particular directions and instructions, for every message he delivered. This was a word that came to him from the Lord, v. 1. We are not told when this sermon was to be preached; but are told, 1. Where it must be preached—in the gates of the Lord's house, and in the earthen court, or the court of the people. It would affront the priests, and expose the prophet to their rage, to have such a message as this delivered within their precincts; but the prophet must not fear the face of man, he cannot be faithful to his God if he do. 2. To whom it must be preached—to the men of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord; probably, it was at the three times, when all the males from all parts of the country were to appear before the Lord in the courts of his house, and not to appear empty; then he had many together to preach to, and that was the most seasonable time to admonish them not to trust to their privileges. Note, (1.) Even those that profess religion have need to be preached to, as well as those that are without. (2.) It is desirable to have opportunity of preaching to many together. Wisdom
chooses to cry in the chief place of concourse, and as
J-remish here, in the opening of the gates, the tem-
ple-gates. (3.) When we are going to worship God,
we have need to be admonished to worship him in
the spirit, and to have no confidence in the flesh,
Phil. iii. 3.

11. The contents and scope of the sermon itself.
It is delivered in the name of the Lord of hosts, the
God of Israel, who commands the world, but cove-
nants with his people. As creatures we are bound
to regard the Lord of hosts, as Christians the God
of Israel; what he said to them he says to us, and it
is in such the same with that which John Baptist said
to the Jews; and it is thus the apostle (Matth. iii. 9).
Be interested wood meet for repentance; and think not
to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our
father. The prophet here tells us,
1. What were the true words of God, which they
might trust to. In short, they might depend upon
it, that, if they would repent, and reform their lives,
and return to God in a way of duty, he would restore
and confirm their peace, would redress their grie-
ances, and return to them in a way of mercy; (v. 3.)
Amend your ways and your doings. This implies
that there had been much amiss in their ways and
doings, many faults and errors. But it is a great
instance of the favour of God to them, that he gives
them liberty to amend, shows them where and how
their errors are, and expects them to amend upon
their amendment; I will cause you to dwell quietly
and peaceably in this place, and a stop shall be put
to that which threatens your expulsion. Reforma-
tion is the only way, and a sure way, to prevent ruin.
He explains himself, (v. 5—7.) and tells them particu-
larly,
(1.) That the amendment was which he expected
from them. They must thoroughly amend; in mak-
ing good, they must make good their ways and
doings; they must reform with resolution, and it
must be a universal, constant, persevering reforma-
tion; not partial, but entire; not hypocritical, but
sincere; not wavering, but constant. They must
make the tree good, and so make the fruit good;
must amend their hearts and thoughts, and so amend
their ways and doings. In particular, (1.] They
must be honest and just in all their dealings. They
that had power in their hands must thoroughly exe-
cute judgment between a man and his neighbour,
without partiality, and according as the merits of
the cause appeared. They must not either in judg-
ment or in contract oppress the stranger, the father-
less, and the widow. They must not oppress a poor
man, that did oppress, nor refuse to do them right when
they sought for it: they must not shed innocent blood,
and with it defile this place and the land wherein
they dwelt. (2.) They must keep close to the wor-
ship of the true God only; Neither walk after other
gods; Do not hanker after them, nor hearken to
those that would draw you into communion with
them; for it is, and must be, a work of reformation
this, with all speed, go through with it, and abide
by it; and I will cause you to dwell in this place, this
temple; it shall continue your place of resort and
refuge, the place of your comfortable meeting with
God and one another; and you shall dwell in the
land that I gave to your fathers for ever and ever,
and shall never be turned out either from God's
house or from your own. It is promised that they
shall still enjoy their civil and sacred privileges, that
they shall have a comfortable enjoyment of them; I
will cause you to dwell here, (and those dwell at
case, whom God gives a settlement to) they shall
enjoy it by covenant, by virtue of the grant made of
it to their fathers, not by providence, but by pro-
cess of law. They shall continue in the enjoyment of
it without eviction or molestation, they shall not be
disturbed, much less dispossessed, for ever and ever;
nothing but sin could throw them out. An ever-
lasting inheritance in the heavenly Canaan is hereby
secured to them in all that live in godliness and
honesty. And the vulgar Latin reads a further privilege
here, v. 3. 7. Habitabis robiscm—We will dwell with
you, ye shall have this place; and we should read Canaan itself
but an uncomfortable place to dwell in, if God did not
dwell with us there.
2. What were the lying words of their own hearts,
which they must not trust to. He cautions them
against this self-deceit; (v. 4.) *' Trust not in lying
words; you are told in what way, and upon what
terms, you may be easy, safe, and happy; now do not
flatter yourselves with an opinion that you may be
so on any other terms, or in any other way."
Yet he charges them with this self-deceit arising
from vanity; (v. 8.) * Behold, it is plain that you
do trust in lying words, notwithstanding what is
said to you; you trust in words that cannot profit;
you rely upon a plea that will stand you in no stead.
"Try that plea, and it is but words of truth, which
would profit them, take shelter of them or serve
them, which cannot profit them. Now these lying
words were, The temple of the Lord, the temple of
the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these. These
buildings, the courts, the holy place, and the holy
of holies, are the temple of the Lord, built by his ap-
pointment, to his glory; here he resides, here he is
worshiped, every nation that meet three times a year
shall render our homage to him as our King in his palace." This
they thought was security enough to them to keep
God and his favours from leaving them, God and his
judgments from breaking in upon them. When the
prophets told them how sinful they were, and how
miserable they were likely to be still, they appealed to the
temple, how can we be either so or so, as long as we have
that holy, happy place among us? The prophet repeats it because they repeated it
upon all occasions. It was the cant of the times, it
was in their mouths upon all occasions. If they
heard an awakening sermon, if any startling piece
of news was brought upon them, they lulled them-
selves asleep again with this, "We cannot but do
our homage to the temple, the temple of the Lord among us.
Note. The privileges of a formal church are often
the pride and confidence of those that are
strangers and enemies to the power of it. It is
common for those that are farthest from God, to boast
themselves most of their being near to the church.
They are haughty because of the holy mountain;
(Zeph. iii. 11.) as if God's mercy were so tied to
that, that he will not bless without it."

Now, to convince them what a frivolous plea this
was, and what little stead it would stand them in,
(1.) He shows them the gross absurdity of it in
itself. If they knew any thing either of the temple
of the Lord, or of the Lord of the temple, they
must think that to plead that, either in excuse of their
sin against God, or in arrest of God's judgment upon
them, was the most ridiculous, unreasonable thing
that could be.
(1.) God is a holy God; but this plea made him
the Patriarch, of the sin of the worst of sins, which even
the light of nature condemns; (v. 9. 10.) * What," says he," will you steal, murder, and commit adul-
tery, be guilty of the vilest immoralities, and which
the common interest, as well as the common sense,
of mankind witness against? Will you swear falsely,
a crime which all nations (who with the belief of a
God have had a veneration for an oath) have always had a horror of? Will you burn intense to Baal, a dunghill-deity, that sets up as a rival with the great Jehovah, and, not content with that, will you walk after other gods too, whom you know not, and by all these crimes put a daring affront upon God, but as the Lord of hosts, and the God of Israel? Will you ever engage a God whose power and goodness you have had such a long experience of, for gods whose ability and willingness to help you you know nothing of? And when you have thus done the worst you can against God, will you brazen your faces so far as to come and stand before him in this house which is called by his name, and in which his name is called upon—stand before him as servants writing his commands, as suppliants expecting his favour? Will you act in open rebellion against him, and yet herd yourselves among his subjects, among the best of them? By this, it should seem, you think that either he does not discover, or does not dislike, your wicked practices, to imagine either of which is to put the highest indignity possible upon him. It is as if you should say, We are delivered to do all these abominations. If they had not the front to say this totidem verbis—in so many words, yet their actions speak it aloud. They could not but own that God, even their own God, had many a time delivered them, and been a present Help to them, when otherwise they must have perished. If, in delivering them, designed to induce them to such highness of importance, to lead them to repentance; but they resolved to persist in their abominations notwithstanding; as soon as they were delivered, (as of old in the days of the Judges,) they did evil again in the sight of the Lord; which was, in effect, to say, in direct contradiction to the true intent and meaning of the providences which had affected them, that God had delivered them in order to confirm them in their opposition against him by sacrificing the more profusely to their idols. Note, Those who continue in sin because grace has abounded, or that grace may abound, do, in effect, make Christ the Minister of sin. Some take it thus: You present yourselves before God with your sacrifices and sin-offerings, and then say, We are delivered, we are discharged from all punishment, now we are free. But this is to blind the world, and stop the mouth of conscience, that you may, the more easily to yourselves, and the more plausibly before others, do all these abominations.

[2.] His temple was a holy place; but this plea made it a protection to the most unholy persons: Is this house, which is called by my name, and is a standing sign of God's kingdom, set by men in opposition to the kingdom of God and Satan —is this become a den of robbers in your eyes? Do you think it was built to be not only a rendezvous of, but a refuge and shelter to, the vilest of malefactors? No; though the horns of the altar were a sanctuary to him that slew a man unawares, yet they were not so to a willful murderer, nor to one that sought and pursued and murdered, as Exod. xxii. 14—18. Kins. ii. 29. Those that think to excuse themselves in heathenish practices with the Christian name, and sin the more boldly and securely because there is a Sin-offering provided, do, in effect, make God's house of prayer a den of thieves; as the priests in Christ's time, Matt. xxi. 13. But could they thus insult the power and goodness of God, and insult the Lord, have seen the real iniquities through the counterfeit and dispersed piety. Note, Though men may deceive one another with the shows of devotion, yet they cannot deceive God.

(2.) He shows them the insufficiency of this plea, adjoined long since in the case of Shiloh. It is certain that Shiloh was ruined, though it had God's sanctuary in it, when by its wickedness it profaned that sanctuary; (v. 12.) Go ye now to my place which was in Shiloh; it is probable that the ruins of that once flourishing city were yet remaining; they might, at least, read the history of it, which ought to affect them as if they saw the place; there God set his name at the first, there the tabernacle was set up when Israel first took possession of Canaan, (Josh. xviii. 1.) and thither the tribes went up; but those that attended the service of the tabernacle there, corrupted both themselves and others, and from them arose the wickedness of his people Israel; that fountain was poisoned, and sent forth malignant streams; and what came of it? Go, see what God did to it. Was it protected by its having the tabernacle in it? No, God forsook it, (Ps. lxxviii. 60.) sent his ark into captivity, cut off the house of Eli that presided there; and it is very probable that the city was quite destroyed, for we never read any more of it but as a monument of divine vengeance upon holy places when they harbour wicked people. Note, God's judgments upon others, who have really revolted from God, while they have kept up a profession of nearness to him, should be a warning to us not to trust in lying words. It is good to consult precedents, and make use of them; remember Lot's wife; remember Shiloh and the seven churches of Asia; and know that the ark and candlestick are moveable things, Rev. ii. 5. Matth. xvii. 13.

[2.] It is certain that Shiloh's fate will be Jerusalem's doom, if a speedy and sincere repentance prevent it not. First, Jerusalem was now as sinful as ever Shiloh was; that is proved by the unerring testimony of God himself against them; (v. 13.) You have done all these works, you cannot deny it: and they continued obstinate in their sin; that is proved by the testimony of their oppressors, who from whom he had delivered them, now they urged them to return to and attend, rising up early and speaking, as one in care, as one in earnest, as one who would lose no time in dealing with them; nay, who should take the fittest opportunity for speaking to them early in the morning, when, if ever, they were sober, and had their thoughts free and clear; but it was all in vain, God spake, but they would not hear; they were inwardly minded; he called them, but they answered not; they would not come at his call. Note, What God has spoken to us greatly aggravates what we have done against him. Secondly, Jerusalem shall shortly be as miserable as ever Shiloh was; Therefore will I do unto this house as I did to Shiloh, ruin it, and lay it waste: v. 14. Those that tread in the steps of the wickedness of those that went before them, must expect to fall by the like judgments, for all these things happen to them for ensamples. The temple at Jerusalem, though ever so strong built, if wickedness was found in it, would be as unable to keep its ground, and as easily conquered, as even the tabernacle in Shiloh was, when God's day of vengeance came; "This is the place, the city, the place, which I gave to you and your fathers, and therefore you are secure of the continuance of it, and think that nothing can turn you out of it; but the men of Shiloh thrust God's name at the first, therefore," this verse quotes another precedent, (v. 13.) the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes, who were the seed of Abraham, and had the covenant of circumcision, and possessed the land which God gave to them and their fathers, and yet their idolatries threw them out, and extirpated them? And can you think but that the same evil courses should be as
fear to you?"  Doubtless they will be so, for God is uniform, and of a piece with himself in his judicial proceedings. It is a rule of justice, ut pars sit ratio—that in a parity of cases the same judgment should proceed; "You have corrupted yourselves as your brethren the seed of Ephraim did, and are become their brethren in iniquity, and the house of Jacob like them in a sight as I have cast them." The interpretation here given of the judgment, makes it a terrible one indeed; the casting of them out of their land signified God's casting them out of his sight as if he would never look upon them, never look after them more. Wherever we are cast, it is well enough, if we be kept in the love of God; but if we are thrown out of his favour, our children, and the generation of our generation, shall be cast out of our own land. This threatening, that God would make this house like Shiloh, we shall meet with again, and find Jeremiah indicted for it, ch. xxxvi. 6.

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

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

1. God here forbids the prophet to pray for them; (v. 16.) "The decree is gone forth, their ruin is resolved on, therefore pray not thou for this people, pray not for the preventing of this judgment threatened; they have sinned unto death, and therefore pray not for their life, but for the life of their souls," 1 John v. 16. See here, 1. That God's prophets are forerunners of God's ministers and people. This is a very weighty consideration; God's ministers and people, and yet pray for their preservation, not knowing that the decree was absolute; and it is the will of God that we pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Even when we threaten sinners with damnation, we must pray for their salvation, that they may turn, and live. Jeremiah was hated, and persecuted, and reproached, by the children of his people, and yet he lived for the sake of God, for it becomes us to labour for evil. 2. That God's praying prophets have a great interest in heaven, how little soever they have on earth. When God was determined to destroy this people, he be-
and drink. [2.] Let us not decline the hardest services, nor disdain to step to the meanest, by which God may be honoured; for none shall kindle a fire on God's altar for naught. Let us think it an honour to be employed in any work for God. [3.] Let us bring up our children in the acts of devotion; let them, as they are capable, be employed in doing something toward the keeping up of religious exercises.

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

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

21. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. 22. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices: 23. But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. 24. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the coun-sels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not for-ward. 25. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early, and sending them: 26. Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hard-ened their neck: they did worse than their fathers. 27. Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee. 28. But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.

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

1. He shows them that obedience was the only thing he required of them, v. 22, 23. He appeals to the original contract, by which they were first formed into a people, when they were brought out of Egypt. God made them a kingdom of priests, not to himself, not that he might be regaled with their sacrifices, as the devils, whom the heathen worshipped, which are represented as eating with pleasure the fat of their sacrifices, and drinking the wine of their drink-offerings, Deut. xxxiii. 38. No, Will God eat the flesh of bulls? Ps. l. 15. I spake not to your fathers concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifi ces; the law and the statutes, and the judgments, and the ordinances, and the commandment which I commanded are not of them at first; but were ancient. They were given before the ceremonial institutions; and those came afterward, as trials of their obedience, and assistances to their repentance and faith. The Levitical law begins thus, If any man of you will bring an offering, he must do so and so, (Lev. i. 2.—ii. 1.) as if it were intended rather to regulate sacrifice than to require it; but that which God commanded, which he bound them to by his supreme authority, and which he insisted upon as the condition of the covenant was, Obey my voice; see Exod. xv. 26, where this was the statute and the ordinance by which God proved them, Hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord thy God. The condition of their being God's peculiar people was this, (Exod. xix. 5.) Be you my people, and I will be your God. Make conscience of the duties of natural religion, observe positive institutions from a principle of obedience; and then, I will be your God, and ye shall be my people," the greatest honour, happiness, and satisfaction, that any of the children of men are capable of. "Let your conversation be regular, and in every thing study to comply with the will and word of God; walk within the bounds that I have set you, and in all the ways that I have commanded you, and then you may assure yourselves that it shall be well with you." The demand here is very reasonable, that we should be directed by Infinite Wisdom to that which is fit; that he that made us should command us, and that he should give us law,
The promise is very encouraging; let God's will be your rule, and his favour shall be your felicity. 

11. He shows them that disobedience was the only thing for which he had a quarrel with them. He would not reprove them for their sacrifices, for the omission of them, they had been continually before him; (Ps. 1. 8.) with them they hoped to irritate God, and procure a license to go on in sin. That therefore, which God had all along laid to their charge, was, breaking his commandments in the course of their conversation; while they observed them, in some instances, in the course of their deviation, v. 24, 25, &c.

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

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

3. When God sent to them by word of mouth to put them in mind of the written word, which was the business of the prophets, it was all one, still they were disobedient. God had servants of his among them in every age, since they came out of Egypt, unto this day, some or other to tell them of their faults, and put them in mind of their duty, whom he rose up early to send, (as before, v. 13.) as men rise up early to call servants to their work; but they were as deaf to the prophets as they were to the word of mouth, and they inclined their ear. This had been their way and manner all along; they were of the same stubborn, refractory disposition with those that went before them; it had all along been the genius of the nation, and an evil genius it was, that continually haunted them till it ruined them at last.

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

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

(2.) He must therefore own that they deserved the character of a disobedient people that were ripe for destruction, and must go to them, and tell them so to their faces; (v. 28.) "Say unto them, This is a nation that obeys not the voice of the Lord their God; they are notorious for their obstinacy; they sacrifice to the Lord as their God, but they will not be ruled by him as their God; they will not receive either the faithful or the correction of his rod, they will not be reclaimed or reformed by either; truth is perished among them, they cannot receive it, they will not submit to it, nor be governed by it; they will not speak truth, there is no believing a word they say, for it is cut off from their mouth, and lying comes in the room of it; they are false both to God and man.

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

Here is,

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

II. Just cause given for this great lamentation.

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

(1.) That they were very impudent in it toward God, and set him at defiance; (v. 30.) They have
This valley of Tophet was a place where the citizens of Jerusalem walked to take the air; but it shall now be spoiled for that use, for it shall be so full of graves, that there shall be no walking there, because of the danger of contracting a ceremonial pollution by the touch of a grave. There it was that they sacrificed some of their children, and dedicated others to Moloch, and there they shall fall as victims to the wrath of God. It had been the burying-place, or burning-place, of the dead bodies of the besiegers, when the Assyrian army was routed by an angel; and for this it was ordained of old, Isa. xxx. 33. But they having forgotten this mercy, and made it the place of their sin, God will now turn it into a burning-place for the besieged. In allusion to this valley, he bids it in the book of Joel, xxvi. 6, xvii. 15, and in the Lamentations, xiv. 4, and xvii. 12, be a place of ruin, for it was called Gehenna, Hinnom, for there were buried both the invading Assyrians, and the revolting Jews; so hell is a receptacle after death both for infidels and hypocrites, the open enemies of God's church, and its treacherous friends; it is the congregation of the dead; it is prepared for the generation of God's wrath. But so great shall that slaughter be, that even the spacious valley shall not be able to contain the slain; and at length shall not be enough left alive to bury the dead, so that the carcasses of the people shall be meat for the birds and beasts of prey, that shall feed upon them like carrion, and none shall have the concern or courage to frighten them away, as Rizpah did from the dead bodies of Saul's sons, 2 Sam. xxi. 16. This was according to the threatening of God against the children of Israel, Jeremiah xix. 1-3. It was a part of the curse; (Deut. xxviii. 26.) The carcasse shall be meat to the fowls and beasts, and no man shall fray them away. Thus do the law and the prophets agree, and the execution with both. The decent burying of the dead is a piece of humanity, in remembrance of what the dead body has been—the tabernacle of a reasonable soul. Nay, it is a piece of divinity, in expectation of what the dead body shall be at the resurrection; the want of it has sometimes been an instance of the rage of men against God's witnesses, Rev. xi. 9. Here it is threatened as an instance of the wrath of God against his enemies, and is an intimation that evil pursues sinners even after death.

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

The prophet proceeds, in this chapter, both to magnify and to justify the destruction that God was bringing upon his people; he shows how grievous, proud, and false were the ways of those people and the means by which they had corrupted God's ordinances, and how righteous it was that he should deal with them so. 1. He represents the judgments coming so very terrible, that death should appear as most to be dreaded, and yet should be desired, v. 1, 3. He aggravates the snares of stupidity and wilful ignorance by which they have brought this ruin upon them, v. 4, 12. He describes the great confusion and consternation that the whole land should be in, upon the alarm of it, v. 13, 17. IV. The prophet is himself deeply affected with it, and lays it very much to heart, v. 19, 22.

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

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

1. Death shall not now be, as it always used to be—the refuse of the dead. When Job makes his court to the grave, it is in hope of this, that there he shall rest with kings and counselors of the earth; but now the ashes of the dead shall be gathered, Ps. cxviii. 19. The Hebrew word signifies, their bones scattered at the grave's mouth, Ps. cxiii. 7. It was threatened in the close of the former chapter, that the soul should be unburied; that might be through neglect, and was not so strange; but here we find the graves of those that were buried, industriously and maliciously opened by the victorious enemy; who, either for covetousness, hoping to find treasure in the graves, or for shame to the nation, and in a rage against it, brought out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the princes. The dignity of their sepulchres could not secure them; nay, did the more expose them to be rifled; but it was base and barbarous thus to trample upon royal dust. We will hope that the bones of good Josiah were not disturbed, because he piously protected the bones of God's servants to the time of the destruction of the idolatrous priests, 2 Kings xxiii. 18. The bones of the priests and prophets too were dug up and thrown about. Some think the false prophets, and the idol-priests, God putting this mark of ignominy upon them: but if they were God's prophets and his priests, it is what the Psalmist complains of, as the fruit of the outrage of the enemies, Ps. lx. 1, 2. Nay, those of the sinful Chaldeans that could not reach to violate the sepulchres of princes and priests, would rather play at small game than

sit out, and therefore pulled the bones of the ordinary inhabitants of Jerusalem out of their graves. The barbarous nations were sometimes guilty of these absurd and inhuman triumphs over those they had conquered, and God permitted it here, for a mark of his displeasure against the generation of his wrath, and for terror to those that survived. The bones being digged out of the graves, were spread abroad upon the face of the earth in contempt, and made a vexation to them for ever; for they shall be to be dried, that they might carry them about in triumph, or might make fuel of them, or make some superstitious use of them. They shall be spread before the sun; for they shall not be ashamed openly to avow the fact at noon-day: and before the moon and stars, even all the host of heaven, whom they have made idols of. From the mention of the sun, moon, and stars, which should be the unconcerned spectators of this tragedy, the prophet takes occasion to show how they had idolized them, and paid those respects to them, which they should have paid to God only; that it might be observed how little they got by worshipping the creature, for the creatures they worshipped when they were in distress, saw it, but were not pleased. It may be, they were rather pleased to see those abused in being defiled, by whom they had been abused in being defiled. See how their respects to their idols are enumerated, to show how we ought to behave toward our God. (1.) They loved them; as amiable beings and bountiful benefactors they esteemed them and delighted in them, and therefore did all that follows. (2.) They served them, did all they could in honor of them, and thought nothing too much; they conformed to all the laws of their superstition, without disputing. (3.) They walked after them, strove to imitate and resemble them, according to the characters and accounts of them they had received, which gave rise and countenance to much of the abominable wickedness of the heathen. (4.) They sought them, consulted them as oracles, appealed to them as judges, implored their favor, and prayed to them as their benefactors. (5.) They worshipped them, gave them divine honor, as having a sovereign dominion over them. Before these lights of heaven, whom they had courted, shall their dead bodies be cast, and left to putrefy, and to be as dung upon the face of the earth; and the sun's shining upon them will but make them the more noisome, and the moon and stars shall be their mourners. Since they esteemed the true God only, it will stand us no need on the other side death and the grave, not for the body, much less for the soul.

2. Death shall now be what it never used to be—the choice of the living: not because there appears in it any thing delightsome; on the contrary, death never appeared in more horrid, frightful shapes than now, and the body shall be prepared not for an easy death, but for a miserable death; not for an easy death, but for a shameful, contemptible death, as of an enemy, as a filth, as a thing not worthy to be buried, for he will make it a reproach to the dead, and a by-word to the living; for a reproach, and a by-word. This verse is not in a believing hope of happiness in the other life, but in a utter despair of any case in this life. The nation is now reduced to a family, so small is the remnant of Israel; it is the remnant of those that remain, for in themselves it is an evil family, still as bad as ever, their hearts unhumbled, and their lusts unmortified: these remain alive (and that is all) in the many places whither they were driven by the judgments of God; some prisoners in the country of their enemies, others beggars in their neighbors' country, and thers fugitives in a country altogether their enemies. And these that died, did very miserably, yet these that survived, and were thus driven out, should live yet more miserably: so that
they should choose death rather than life, and wish a thousand times that they had fallen with them to the earth by the sword. Let this cure us of the inordinate love of life, that the case may be such, that it may become a burden and terror, and we may be strongly tempted to choose strangling and death rather.

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

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

I. They would not attend to the dictates of reason; they would not act in the affairs of their souls with the same common prudence with which they acted in other things. They were, at least significantly, in the sight of God, mad men; and religion would soon rule them, if right reason might. Observe it here; Come, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; (ver. 4, 5.) Shall men fall, and not arise? If men happen to fall to the ground, to fall into the dirt, will they not get up again as fast as they can? They are not such fools as to lie still when they are down. Shall a man turn aside out of the right way? Yes, the most careful traveller may miss his way; but then, as soon as he is aware of it, will he not return? Yes, certainly he will, with all speed, and will thank him that showed him his mistake. Thus men do in other things; why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? Why do they not, when they are fallen into sin, hasten to get up again by repentance? Why do they not, when they see they have missed their way, correct their error, and turn? No, this is what is given in a way that he knows will never bring him back to his way; why then is this people slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? See the nature of sin—it is a backsliding, it is going back from the right way; not only into a by-path, but into a contrary path; back from the way that leads to life to that which leads to utter destruction. And this backsliding, if mortality greatly interpose to prevent it, will be a perpetual backsliding, it will have no end or hinderers endlessly, but proceeds endwise toward ruin. The same subtlety of the tempter that brings men to sin, holds them fast in it, and they contribute to their own captivity, they hold fast deceit. Sin is a great cheat, and they hold it fast; they love it dearly, and resolve to stick to it, and baffle all the methods God takes to part them between them and their sins. The more they may amount of the worst deceits, and so are all their hopes of impunity; yet they hold fast these, and will not be undeceived, and therefore they refuse to return. Note, There is some deceit or other which those hold fast that go on wilfully in sinful ways; some lie in their right hand, by which they keep hold of their sins.

II. They would not attend to the dictates of conscience, which is our reason; it is the witness of God in our hearts, and our own actions. Observe, 1. What expectations there were from them, that they would think for themselves; I hearkened and heard. The prophet listened to see what effect his preaching had upon them; God himself listened, as one that desires not the death of sinners, that would have been glad to hear any thing that promised repentance, that would certainly have heard it, if there had been any thing said of that tendency, and would soon have answered it with comfort, as he did David when he said, I will confess, Ps. xxxii. 5. God looks upon men, when they have done amiss, (Job xxxix. 27.) to see what they will do next; he hearkens and hears. 2. How these expectations were disappointed; They spake not aright, as I thought they would have done. They did not only not do right, but did as much as they could, and would not get a good word from them, nothing on which to ground any favour to them, or hopes concerning them. There was none of them that spake aright, none that repenteth him of his wickedness. These that have sinned, then, and then only, speak aright, when they speak of repenting; and it is sad when those that have made so much work for repentance, do not say a word of repentance. Not only God begins in a serious and impartial inquiry into ourselves, what we have done, arising from a conviction that we have done amiss. (2.) They were so far from repenting of their sins, that they went on resolutely in their sins; Every one turned to his course, his wicked course, that course of sin which he had chosen and accustomed himself to, as the horse rushes into the battle, eager upon action, and scorning to be curbed. How the horse rushes into the battle, is elegantly described, Job xxxix. 21, 8c.
He mocks at fear, and is not affrighted. Thus the dashing hero laughs at the threats of the world as bugbears, and runs violent upon the instruments of death and slaughter, and nothing will be restrained from him.

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

IV. They would not attend to the dictates of the written word. They say, We are wise; but how can they say so? With what face can they pretend to any thing of wisdom, when they do not understand themselves so well as the brute creatures? Where they truly, they think they are wise, because the law of the Lord is with them, the book of the law and the interpreters of it; and their neighbours, for the same reason, conclude they are wise; Deut. iv. 6. But their pretensions are groundless for all this; Lo, certainly in vain made he it; surely never any people had Bibles to so little purpose as they have. They might as well have been without the law, unless they had made a little use of it. They did not indeed make it able to make men wise to salvation, but as to them it is made so in vain, for they are never the wiser for it; The pen of the scribes, of those that first wrote the law, and of those that now write expositions of it, are in vain. Both the favour of their God, and the labour of their scribes, are lost upon them; they receive the grace of God therein in vain. Note, There are many that enjoy abundance of the means of grace, that have great plenty of Bibles and ministers, but they have them in vain; they do not answer the end of their having them. But it might be said, They have some wise men among them, to whom the law and the pen of the scribes are not in vain. To this it is answered, (v. 9.) The wise men are ashamed, they have reason to be so, that they have not made better use of their wisdom, and lived more up to it. They are confounded and taken; all their wisdom has not served to keep them from those courses that tend to their ruin. They are taken in the same snares that others of their neighbours, who have not pretended to so much wisdom, are taken in, and filled with the same confusion. Those that have more knowledge than others, and yet do no better than others for their own souls, have reason to be ashamed. They talk of their wisdom, but, Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; they would not be governed by it, would not follow its direction, would not d. what they knew; and then what wisdom is in them? None to any purpose; none that will be found to their praise at the great day, how much soever it is found to their pride now.

The pretenders to wisdom, who said, “We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us,” were the priests and the false prophets; with them the prophet here deals. 1. He threatens the judgments of God against them. Their families and estates shall be ruined; (v. 10.) Their wives shall be given to others, when they are taken captives, and their fields shall be taken from them by the victorious enemy, and shall be given to those that shall inherit them; not only strip them for once, but take possession of them as their own and secure a property in them, which they shall transmit to their posterity. And, (v. 12.) notwithstanding all their pretensions to wisdom and sanctity, they fall among them that fall; for if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall together into the ditch. In the time of their visitation, when the wickedness of the land comes to be inquired into, it will be found that they have contributed to it more than any, and therefore they shall be sure to be cast down and cast out. 2. He gives a reason for these judgments, (v. 10, 12.) even the same account of their business which we meet with before, (ch. vi. 13—15.) where it was opened at large. (1.) They were greedy of the wealth of this world, which is bad enough in any, but worst in prophets and priests, who should be best acquainted with another world, and therefore should have shewn a more prospect to our posterity that the least to the greatest, were given to covetousness. The priests teach for hire, and the prophets drave for money, Mic. iii. 11. (2.) They made no conscience of speaking truth, no not when they spake as priests and prophets; Every one deals falsely; looks one way, and rows another. There is no such thing as sincerity among them. (3.) They flattered people in their sins, and so led them into destruction. They pretended to be the physicians of the state, but knew not how to apply prophet remedies to its growing maladies; they healed them slightly, killed the patient with palliative cures; silencing their fears and complaints with, “Peace, peace, all is well, and there is no danger,” when the God of heaven was proceeding in his controversy with them. (4.) They had dealt unjustly, and not made a better use of the means of grace, than the grossest forgeries, they would justify what they had done, and laugh at those whom they had imposed upon. Such as these were ripe for ruin.

13. I will surely consume them, saith the Lord; there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig-tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them. 14. Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defenced cities, and let us be silent there: for the Lord our God hath put us to silence, and given us waters of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the Lord. 15. We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and be hold trouble! 16. The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan; the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have
devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein. 17. For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the Lord. 18. When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me. 19. Behold, the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people, because of them that dwell in a far country. Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in her? why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities? 20. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. 21. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. 22. Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

In these verses, we have,
1. God threatening the destruction of a sinful people. He has been long with them, but they are still more and more provoking, and therefore now their ruin is resolved on; I will surely consume them; (ver. 13.) consuming I will consume them, not only surely, but utterly, consume them; will follow them with one judgment after another, till they are quite consumed; it is a consumption determined, Is. x. 23. 1. They shall be quite stripped of all their comfort; (ver. 13.) There shall be no grapes on the vine. Some understand it as intimating their sin; God came looking for grapes from this vineyard, seeking fruit upon this fig-tree, but he found none, (as Isa. v. 2. Lake xiii. 6.) nay, they had not so much as leaves, Matth. xxxi. 19. But it is rather to be understood of God's judgments upon them; and may be meant literally. The enemy shall seaze the fruits of the earth, shall pluck the grapes and figs for themselves, and beat down the very leaves with them; or, rather, figuratively: They shall be deprived of all their comforts, and shall have nothing left them wherewith to make glad their hearts. It is expanded in the last clause, The things that I have given them shall pass away from them. Note, God's gifts are upon condition, and revocable upon non-performance of the condition. Mercies abused are forfeited, and it is just with God to take the forfeiture.
2. They shall be set upon by all manner of grievances, and surrounded with calamities; (ver. 17.) I will send serpents among you, the Chaldean army, fiery serpents, flying serpents, cockatrices; these shall be a plague to you, and shall not be charmed, as some serpents used to be, with music. These are serpents of another nature, that are not so wrought upon; or they are as the deaf adder, that stops her ear, and will not hear the voice of the charmer. The enemies are so intent upon miking slaughter, that it will be to no purpose to accost them gently, or offer any thing to pacify them or mollify them, or to bring them to a better temper. No peace with God, therefore none with them.
3. The people sinking into despair under the pressure of those calamities. They that were void of fear, (when the trouble was at a distance,) and set it at defiance, are void of hope now that it breaks in upon them, and have no heart, either to make head against it, or to bear up under it, v. 14. They cannot think themselves safe in the open villages; Why do we sit still here? Let us assemble and go in to the cities which are begun to be inhabited, and let us build houses, and dwell therein, v. 14. They expected no other than to be surely cut off thereat last, yet not so soon as in the country, and therefore, "Let us go, and be silent there; let us attempt nothing, nor so much as make a complaint; for to what purpose?" It is not a submissive, but a stilled, silence, that they here condemn themselves to. Those that are most jovial in their prosperity, commonly despise most, and are most melancholy, in trouble.

Now observe what it is that sinks them.
1. They are sensible that God is angry with them; The Lord our God has put us to silence, has struck us with astonishment, and given us water of gall to drink, which is both bitter and stupefying, or intoxicating; (Ps. ix. 3.) Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment. We had better sit still than rise up and fall; better say nothing than say nothing to the purpose. To what purpose is it to contend with our fate, when God himself is become our Enemy, and fights against us? Because we have sinned against the Lord, therefore we are brought to this plunge. This may be taken as the language, (1.) Of their indignation. They seem to quarrel with God, as if he had dealt hardly with them, in punishing them, and provoking them to speak for themselves, and then telling them, that it was because they had sinned against him. Thus men's foolishness perverts their way, and then their hearts fret against the Lord. Or, rather, (2.) Of their convictions. At length they begin to see the hand of God lifted up against them, and stretched out in the calamities under which they are now laid, and find, that their provoking God provoked him to contend with them. Note, Soon or later, God will bring the most obstinate to acknowledge both his providence and his justice, in all the troubles they are brought into; to see and say, both that it is his hand, and that he is righteous.
2. They are sensible that the enemy is likely to be too hard for them, v. 16. They are soon apprehensive that it is to no purpose to make head against such a mighty force; they and their people are quite dispirited; and when the courage of a nation is gone, their numbers will stand them in little stead. The snorting of the horses was heard from Dan, the report of the formidable strength of their cavalry was soon carried all the nation over, and every body trembled at the sound of the neighing of his steeds; for they are come, and there is no opposing them; they have deaved the land, and all that is in the city; both town and country are laid waste before them, not only the wealth, but the inhabitants of both, those that dwell therein. Note, When God appears against us, every thing else that is against us appears very formidable; whereas if he be for us, every thing appears very despicable, Rom. viii. 31.
3. They are disappointed in their expectations of deliverance out of their troubles, as they had been surprised when their trouble came upon them; and this double disappointment very much aggra-

vaed their calamity. (1.) The trouble came when they little expected it; (ver. 15.) He looked for peace, the continuance of our peace, but no good came, no good news from abroad, no look of relief for our health and prosperity to our nation, but behold trouble, the alarms of war; for, as it follows, (ver. 16.) the noise of the enemies' horses was heard from Dan. Their false prophets had cried, Peace, peace, to them, which made it the more terrible, when the scene of war opened on a sudden. This complaint will occur again, ch. xiv. 19. (2.) The deliverance

in upon them, and have no heart, either to make head against it, or to bear up under it, v. 14. They cannot think themselves safe in the open villages; Why do we sit still here? Let us assemble and go in to the cities which are begun to be inhabited, and let us build houses, and dwell therein, v. 14. They expected no other than to be surely cut off thereat last, yet not so soon as in the country, and therefore, "Let us go, and be silent there; let us attempt nothing, nor so much as make a complaint; for to what purpose?" It is not a submissive, but a stilled, silence, that they here condemn themselves to. Those that are most jovial in their prosperity, commonly despise most, and are most melancholy, in trouble.

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

4. They are deceived in these things which were their confidence, and which they thought would have secured their peace to them; (v. 19.) The daughter of my people cries, cries aloud, because of them that dwell in a far country, because of the foreign enemy that invades them, that comes from a far country to take possession of ours; this occasioned the cry; and what is the cry? Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her? These were the two things that they had all along brought up upon themselves, and depended upon. (1.) That they had among them the temple of God, and the tokens of his special presence with them; the temple, so they had a "Mansion House in Zion." Whence danger then need we fear?" And they held by this when the trouble was breaking in upon them; "Surely we shall do well enough, for have we not God among us?" But when it grew to an extremity, it was an aggravation of their misery that they had thus flattered themselves. (2.) That they had the house of David, and his house, and this was an additional reason, so they had a "House of David which is a holy one." Whence danger then need we fear?" And they turned an answer to it immediately, Why have they provided me to anger with their graven images? They quarrel with God, as if he had dealt unkindly by them in forsaking them, whereas they by their idolatry had driven him from them; they have withdrawn from their allegiance to him, and so have thrown themselves out of his protection. They fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, (Isa. viii. 21.) when it is their own sin that separates between them and God; (Isa. lx. 2.) they "fear not the Lord, and then what can a king do for them?" Hos. x. 3.

III. We have here the prophet himself bewailing the calamity and ruin of his people; for there were no greater arguments or considerations of it, than those we find in the book that bears that title. Observe here,

1. How great his griefs were. He was an eye-witness of the desolations of his country, and saw those things which by the spirit of prophecy he had foreseen. In the foresight, much more in the sight of them, he cries out, My heart is faint in me, and my heart is sick at the consideration of it, v. 18. When I would comfort myself against my sorrow, I do but labour in vain; nay, every attempt to alleviate the grief does but aggravate it: It is our wisdom and duty, under mournful events, to do what we can to "comfort ourselves against our sorrow," by suggesting to ourselves such considerations as are proper to allay the grief, and balance the grievance. But sometimes the sorrow is such, that the more it is repressed, the more strongly it recoils. It may sometimes be the case of very good men, as of the prophet here, whose soul refused to be comforted, and fainted at the cordial, Ps. lxvii. 2, 3. He adds, (v. 21.) what was the matter: It was for the hurt of the daughter of my people, that I am thus hurt; it is for their sin, and the miseries they have brought upon themselves by it: it is for this, I am black, that I look black, that I go in black as mourners do, and that astonishment has taken hold on me, so that I know not what to do, nor which way to turn. Note, The miseries of far country ought to be very much the grief of our souls. A gracious spirit will be a public spirit, a tender spirit, a mourning spirit. It becomes us to lament the miseries of our fellow-creatures, much more to lay to heart the calamities of our country, and especially of the church of God, to grieve for the affliction of Joseph. Jeremiah had prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, and though the truth of his prophecy was questioned, yet he did not retract in the proof of the truth of it by the accomplishment of it, preferring the welfare of his country before his own reputation. If Jerusalem had repented and been spared, he would have been far from fretting, as Jonah did. Jeremiah had many enemies in Judah and Jerusalem, that hated and reproached and persecuted him; and in the judgments brought on them, God did, by and by, and pleased his prophets cause; yet he was far from rejoicing in it, so truly did he forgive his enemies, and desire that God would forgive them.

2. How small his hopes were; (v. 22.) Is there no balm in Gilead? No medicine proper for a sick and dying kingdom? Is there no physician there? No skilful, faithful hand to apply the medicine? We have seen that God had sent a physician in the form of the Lord Jesus Christ, but the people would not own him, or receive him, and so the miseries of the land continued, and the hopes there were of their being helped were as vain and as scarce as those of their disease upon themselves; and so the question must be answered affirmatively; Is there no balm in Gilead? No physician there? Certainly there is; God is able to help and heal them, there is a sufficiency in him to redress all their grievances. Gilead was a place in their own land, not far off; they had among themselves God's law and his prophets, by the help of which they might have been brought to repentance, and their ruin might have been prevented; they had princes and priests, whose business it was to reform the nation, and redress their grievances. What could have been done more than has been done for their recovery? Why then is not their health restored? Certainly it was not owing to God, but to the lack of a physician, or a physician, but because they would not admit the application, or submit to the methods of cure. The physician and physic were both ready, but the patient was wilful and irregular, would not be tied to rules, but must be humoured. Note, If sinners die of their wounds, their blood is upon their own heads. The blood of Christ is balm in Gilead, balm and medicine; but the question is, will the patient have it? He is sufficient, all-sufficient, so that they might have been healed, but would not.

CHAP. IX.

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

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

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

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

2. He laments the slaughter of the persons; the bloodshed, and the lives lost; (v. 1.) "O that my head were waters, quite melted and dissolved with grief, that so mine eyes might be fountains of tears, weeping abundance, continually, and without interval, still sending forth fresh floods of tears, as there still occur fresh occasions for them!" The same word in Hebrew signifies both the eye and a fountain, as if in this land of sorrows our eyes were designed rather for weeping than seeing. Jeremiah weeps in such great numbers of words, that he might affect a stupid people, and raise them to a due sense of the hand of God gone out against them. Note, It becomes us, while we are here in this vale of tears, to conform to the temper of the climate, and to sow in tears. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted hereafter; but those who expect that while they are here, the clouds will still rain upon them as in the wilderness of Kenez, and not take away tears, but make them the fountains of sin, it is fit that our eyes should be fountains of tears. But Jeremiah's grief here is upon the public account: he would weep day and night, not so much for the death of his own near relations, but for the slain of the daughter of his people, the multitudes of his countrymen that fell by the sword of war. Note, When we hear of the number of our countrymen perishing by great disasters, we ought to be much affected with it, and not to make a light matter of it; yea, though they be not of the daughter of our people, for, whatever people they are of, they are of the same human nature with us; and there are so many precious lives lost, as dear to them as ours to us, and so many precious souls gone into eternity. He laments the desolations of the country. This he brings in, v. 10. (for impious mourners are not often very methodical in their discourses,) "Not for the towns and cities merely, but for the mountains, will I take up a weeping and wailing;" not barren mountains, but the fruitful hills with which Judah abounded; and for the habitations of the wilderness, or, rather, the pastures of the plain, that used to be clothed with flocks, or covered over with corn; and a goodly sight it was; but now they are burnt up by the Chaldean army, which, according to the custom of war, destroyed the forage, and carried off all the cattle; so that no one dares to pass through them, for fear of meeting with some parties of the enemy; no one cares to pass through them, every thing looks so melancholy and frightful: one has no time to do any business to pass through them, for they hear not the voice of the cattle; the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen, that grateful music to the owners; nay, both the fowl of the heavens, and the beasts, are fled, either frightened away by the rude noises and terrible fires which the enemies make, or forced away because there is no subsistence for them. Note, God has many ways of turning a fruitful land into barrenness, for the sake of the destruction of the land of his choice; and the havoc war makes in a country cannot but be for a lamentation to all tender spirits, for it is a tragedy which destroys the stage it is acted on.

11. He abandons himself to solitude, in consideration of the scandalous character and conduct of his people. Though he dwells in Judah where God is known, in Salem where Psalms are written, yet he is ready to compare it with the desert of Chaharmoni: "Ah! Ps. cxx. 5. While all his neighbours are fleeing to the defended cities, and Jerusalem especially, in dread of the enemies' rage, (ch. iv. 8, 6.) he is contriving to retire into some desert, in detestation of his people's sin: (v. 2.) O that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, such a lonely cottage to dwell in as they have in the deserts of Arabia, which are uninhabited, for fear of strangers to repose themselves in, that I may leave my people, and go from them! Not only because of the
They are not valiant for truth in the land, the land which has truth for the glory of it. Truth is fallen in the land, and they dare not lend a hand to help it up, Is. lxv. 14, 15. We must answer, another day, not only for our timidity in opposing truth, but for our cowardice in defending it. [2.] Go into their families, and you will find they will cheat their own brethren, (every brother will utterly supplant,) they will trip up one another's heels if they can, for they be at the catch, to seek all advantages against those they hope to make a hand of. Jacob had his Jacob's ladder for upstaging, it is the word here used; they followed him not for love, but lust in his character, without guile. So very false are they, that you cannot trust in a brother, but must stand as much upon your guard, as if you were dealing with a stranger, with a Canaanite that has balances of deceit in his hand. Things are come to an ill pass indeed, when a man cannot put confidence in his own brethren, for he that is a brother of the cloister, will not trust him. [3.] Go into company, and observe both their commerce and their conversation, and you will find there is nothing of sincerity or common honesty among them; Nec hos hospe ab hospite tutus—The host and the guest are in danger from each other. The best advice a wise man can give you, is, to take heed every one of his neighbour, nay, of his friend, (so some read it,) of whom he has been connived at, for he has been connived at, and connived at. No man thinks himself bound to be either grateful or sincere. Take them in their converse; and every neighbour will walk with slander, they care not what ill they say one of another, though even so false; that way that the slander goes they get: they will walk with it. They will walk about from house to house too, carrying slanders along with them, till all the ill-natured stories they can pick up, or invent, to make mischief. Take them in their trading and bargaining; and they will deceive every one his neighbour, will say anything, though they know it to be false, for their own advantage. Nay, they will lie for lying sake, to keep their tongues in use to it, for they will not speak the truth, but will tell a deliberate lie, and laugh at it when they have done.

That which aggravates the sin of this false and lying generation, is, First, That they are ingenuous to sin; They have taught their tongue to speak lies, implying, that, through the reluctances of natural conscience, they found it difficult to bring themselves to it. Their tongue would have spoken truth, but they taught it to speak lies, and by degrees have made themselves masters of the art of lying, and have got such a habit of it, that use has made it a second nature to them. They learned it when they were young, (for the wicked are estranged from the womb, speaking lies, Ps. lxi. 3.) and now they are grown dexterous at it. Secondly, That they are industrious to sin; They weary themselves to commit iniquity; they put a force upon their consciences, to bring themselves to it; they tire out their conscience by continual usage. Lastly, That they are provident to evil, from one sin to another, from one degree of sin to another. They began with lesser sins; (Nimis repente fit turhissimus—No one reaches the height of vice at once;) they began with equivocating and bantering, but at last came to downright lying. And they are now proceeding to greater sins yet, for they know not me, saith the Lord. Where men have no knowledge of God, or no consideration of...
what they have known of him, what good can be expected from them? Men's ignorance of God is the cause of all their ill conduct one towards another.

2. The prophet shows what God had informed him of their wickedness, and what he had determined as a punishment for it.

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

(2.) He had marked them for ruin, v. 7, 9, 11. Those that will not know God as their Lawgiver, shall be made to know him as their Judge. God determines here to bring his judgments upon them, for the refining of some, and the ruining of the rest. [1.] Some shall be refined, (v. 7.) Because they are thus corrupt, behold, I will melt them, and try them, will bring them into trouble, and see what that will do toward bringing them to repentance: whether the furnace of affliction will purify them from their dross, and whether, when they are melted, they will be new-cast in a better mould. He will make trial of lesser afflictions, before he brings upon them the full heat of his wrath, for he desires not the death of sinners. They shall not be rejected as reprobate silver, till the Founder has melted in vain, ch. vii. 39, 30. For how shall I do for the daughters of my people? He speaks as one consulting with himself what to do with them, that might be for the best, and as one that could not find in his heart to cast them off, and give them up to ruin, till he had first tried all means to bring them to return to a happiness. Or, How shall I do for them? They are grown so very corrupt, that there is no other way with them but to put them into the furnace, with what other course can I take with them? (Isa. v. 4, 5.) It is the daughter of my people, and I must do something to vindicate my own honour, which will be reflected upon if I connive at their wickedness; I must do something to reduce and reform them. A parent corrects his own children because they are his own. Note, When God afflicts his people, it is with a gracious design to modify and reduce them; it is but when need is, and when he knows it is the best method he can use.

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

12. Who is the wise man, that may understand this: and who is he to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth and is burnt up like a wilderness, that none passeth through? 13. And the Lord saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; 14. But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them: 15. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. 16. I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them. 17. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning women, that they may come; 18. And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters. 19. For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion, How are we spoiled! we are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land, because our dwellings have cast us out. 20. Yet hear the word of the Lord, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation: 21. For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets. 22. Speak, Thus saith the Lord, Even the carcasses of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvest-man, and none shall gather them.
JUDAH AND JERUSALEM. 1. To convince people of the justice of God in it, that they had by sin brought it upon themselves, and that therefore they had no reason to quarrel with God, who did them no wrong at all, but a great deal of reason to fall out with their sins, which did them all this mischief. 2. To affect people with the greatness of the desolation that was coming, and the miserable effects of it, by a terrible prospect of the apostasy and reformation, which was the only way to prevent it, or, at least, mitigate their own share in it. This being designed, 1. He calls for the thinking men, by them to show the people the equity of God's proceedings, though they seemed harsh and severe; (v. 12.) 'Who, where, is the wise man, or the prophet, to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken? You boast of your wisdom, and of the prophets you have among you; produce me any one that has but the free use of human reason, or any acquaintance with divine revelation, and he will soon understand this himself, and it will be so clear to him, that he will be ready to declare it to others, that there is a just ground of God's controversy with this people.' Do these men inquire into the reason why the land of the Lord suffers this matter, that such a change is made with this land? Is it used to be a land that God cared for, and he had his eyes upon it for good; (Deut. xi. 2.) but it is now a land that he has forsaken, and that his face is against: it is used to flourish as the garden of the Lord, and to be replenished with inhabitants; but now it is burnt up like a wilderness, that none passeth through it. Was it supposed, long ago, that it would be asked, when it came to this, 'Wherefore has the Lord done this unto this land? What means the heat of this great anger?' (Deut. xxiv. 24.) to which question God here gives a full answer, before which all flesh must be silent. He produces out of the record, 1. The indictment preferred and proved against them, upon which they had been found guilty, v. 13, 14. It is charged upon them, and it cannot be denied, (1.) That they have revolted from their allegiance to their rightful Sovereign: therefore God has forsaken their land, and justly, because they have forsaken his laws, which he had so plainly, so fully, so frequently set before them, and had not observed his orders, not obeyed his voice, nor walked in it, but went after strange gods; and all their wickedness began, in the omission of their duty to their God, and a contempt of his authority. But it did not end here. It is further charged upon them, (2.) That they have entered themselves into the service of pretended and usurpers, have not only withdrawn themselves from their obedience to their Prince, but have taken up arms against him. For, (v. 15.) They have acted according to the tradition received from their fathers; They have walked after Baalim; the word is plural; they had many Baals, Balaam, and Bal-bethir, the Baal of this place, and the Baal of the other place; for they had lords many, which their fathers taught them to worship, but which the God of their fathers had laid again and again hidden. This was it which the Lord had punished. The King of kings ever makes war upon his own subjects, but when they treacherously depast from him, and rebel against him, it is become necessary by this means to chastise their rebellion, and reduce them to their allegiance; and they themselves shall at length acknowledge that he is just in all that is brought upon them. 2. To judgment given upon this indictment, the sentence upon the convicted rebels, which must now be executed, for it was righteous, and nothing could be moved in arrest of it: 'The Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, hath said it; (v. 15, 16.) and who can reverse it? (1.) That all their comfort at home shall be turned into poison, or rather into medicine, that shall save them; I will feed the people with worm wood; or, another translation, for it signifies an herb that is not wholesome, as wormwood is, though it be bitter, but some herb that is both nauseous and noxious, and I will give them water of gall, or juice of hemlock, or some other herb that is poisonous, to drink. Every thing about them, till it comes to their very meat and drink, shall be a terror and sweat to them, and they will curse their blessings, Mal. ii. 2. (2.) That their dispersion abroad shall be their destruction; (v. 16.) I will scatter them among the heathen. They are corrupted and debauched by the intimacy with the heathen, and they will mingle themselves, and learn their works and now they shall lose themselves there where they lost their virtue, and not be able to find the way to their return, and that truth, which is the bond and cement of society and commerce, and addicted themselves to deceit and lying, and therefore are justly crumbling to dust, and scattered among the heathen. They set up gods which neither their fathers nor their fathers' fathers had known, strange gods, new gods; (Deut. xxxii. 17.) and now God will put them among neighbours which neither their fathers nor their fathers' fathers had known, strange gods, new gods, which they claim no acquaintance with, and therefore can expect no favour from. And yet, though they are scattered so as that they will not know where to find one another, God will know where to find them all out, (Ps. xxxii. 8.) with that evil which still pursues impenitent sinners: I will send a sword after them, some killing judgment or other, till I have consumed them, for when God judges, he will overcome, when he pursues, he will overtake. And now we see for what the land perishes, all this desolation is the desert of their deeds, and the performance of God's words. 3. He calls for the mourning women, and engages them with their arts to affect people, and move their passion, to lament these sad calamities that were coming upon them; and wherever their imagination might be alarmed to prepare for them. The Lord of hosts himself says, Call for the mourning women, that they may come, v. 17. The scope of this is to show how very woful and lamentable the condition of this people was likely to be. 4. Here is work for the counterfeit mourners: Send for the crying women that know how to compute mournful ditties, or, at least, to sing them in mournful tunes and accents, and therefore are made use of at funerals to supply the want of true mourners. Let these take up a warning for us, v. 18. The deaths and funerals were so many, that people wept for them till they had no more power to weep, as those, 1 Sam. xxxiv. 4. Let them therefore do it now, whose trade it is; or, rather, it intimates the necessity of sincere mourners, that no one, or at least none but sincere mourners, do not at least not to hear the judgments they were under, nor, even when there was so much blood shed, could find in their hearts to shed a tear. They cry not when God binds them, Job xxxvi. 13. God sent his mourning prophets to them, to call them to weeping and mourning, but his word in their mouths was not work upon their heart; rather therefore than they shall go glad to their kin, let the mourning women come, and try to work upon their fancy, that their eyes may at least run down with tears, and their eyelids gush out with waters. First, lust, sinners must be weepers.
2. Here is work for the real mourners.

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

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

The judgment here threatened is made to look terrible.

[1.] Multitudes shall be slain, v. 21. Death shall ride in triumph, and there shall be no escaping his arrests, when he comes with commission, neither within doors nor without: not within doors, for let the doors he shut ever so fast, let them be ever so firmly locked and bolted, death comes up into our windows, like a thief in the night; it stealths upon us ever so secretly, enters through its boldly attack the cottages only, but it is entered into our palaces, the palaces of our princes and great men, though ever so stately, ever so strongly built and guarded. Note, No palaces can keep out death. Nor are those more safe that are abroad; death cuts off even the children from without, and the young men from the midst of them. Likewise, we are liable to be surprised by the enemy in pity, because they had never been hurtful to them, and the young men who might have been spared in policy, because capable of being serviceable to them, shall fall to gather by the sword. It's usual now, even in the greatest military operations, to put more of the sword but those that are found in arms; but then even the boys and girls playing in the streets were sacrificed to the fury of the conqueror.

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

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

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

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

Here he shows, 1. What we may not depend upon in a day of distress: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, as if with the help of that he could wit or counteract the enemy, or in the greatest
extremity find out some evasion or other; for a man's wish may fail him when he needs it most, and he may be taken in his own craftiness. Altho-
phel was besieged, and counsellors are often led away by
spoil them. But if a man's policies fail him, yet surely
he may gain his point by might, and dint of courage;
and not the strong man glory in his strength, for
the battle is not always to the strong: David the
stripling proves too hard for Goliath the giant. All
him's flesh, and yet it is the wisdom of God to
nothing against him. But may not the rich man's
wealth be his strong city? (Money answers all
things.) No. Let not the rich man glory in his riches,
for they may prove so far from sheltering him,
that they may expose him, and make him the fairer
mark. Let not the people boast of the wise men,
and mighty men, and rich men that they have
among them, as if they could make their part good
against the Chaldeans, because they have wise men
to advise concerning the war, mighty men to fight
their battles, and rich men to bear the charges of
the war. Let not particular persons think to escape
the common calamity by their wisdom, might, or money,
for all these will prove but vain things for safety.
How then shall what we may depend upon in a day of
distress? (1.) The true confidence is that which we have
that we have done our duty. They that refused to
know God, (v. 6.) will boast in vain of their wisdom
and wealth; but they that know God intelligently,
that understand aright that he is the Lord, that have
not only right apprehensions concerning his
nature, and attributes, and relation to man, but rec-
ceived grace and knowledge of them, may glory in
this, it will be their rejoicing in the day of ev-
(2.) Our only confidence in trouble will be, that,
having through grace in some measure done our duty,
we shall find God a God all-sufficient to us. We may
glory in this, that, wherever we are, we have an
acquaintance with, and an interest in, a God that
exercises loving-kindness, and judgment, and righ-
teoussness, in the earth; that is not only just to all his
creatures, and will do no wrong to any of them, but kind
to all his children, and will protect them, and
provide for them. For in these things I delight.
God directs to show kindness, and to execute judg-
ment himself, and is pleased with those who herein
are followers of him as dear children. Those that
have such knowledge of the glory of God as to be
changed into the same image, and to partake of his
holiness, are peculiar to themselves and their glory;
and the God they thus faithfully conform to, they
may cheerfully confide in, in their greatest straits.
But the prophet intimates that the generality of
this people took no care about this. Their wisdom,
and might, and riches, were their joy and hope, which
would end in grief and despair. But those few
among them that had the knowledge of God, might
please themselves with his and boast themselves of
it; it would stand them in better stead than thousands
of gold and silver.
II. When they were told how provoking their
sins were to God, they vainly pleaded the covenant
of their circumcision. They were, undoubtedly,
the people of God; as they had the temple of the
Lord in their city, so they had the mark of his
children in their bodies. But the head of God
has laid such and such nations waste, because they
were uncircumcised, and therefore not under the
protection of the Divine Providence, as we are."
To this the prophet answers, That the days of
visitation were now at hand, in which God would
punish all wicked people, without making any dis-
section between the circumcised and uncircumcised,
v. 25, 26. They shall see the difference between
their peculiarity, and lived in common with the
uncircumcised nations, and so had forfeited the benefit
of that peculiarity, and must expect to fare never
the better for it. God will punish the circumscribed
with the uncircumcised. As the ignorance of the
uncircumcised shall not excuse their wickedness, so
neither shall the privileges of the circumcised exc-
thor their sins, but they shall be punished together.
Note, The Judge of all the earth is impartial, and
none shall fire the better at his bar for any external
advantages, but he will render to every man, cir-
sumcised or uncircumcised, according to his works.
The children of Israel had been uncircumcised, it
will be as sure as night, and more severe
than, that of impenitent sinners that are unbaptized.
It would affect one to find these words inscribed, put between Egypt and Edom, as standing upon a
level with them, and under the same doom, v. 26.
These nations were forbidden a share in the Jews'
privileges, Deut. xxv. 3. But the Jews are here
sold that they shall share in their punishments.
Those in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wild-
erness, are supposed to be the Kedarenes, and those
of the kingdoms of Hazor, as appears by comparing
ch. xlii. 28—32. Some think they are so called,
because they dwelt as it were in a corner of the
world: others, because they had the hair of their
head folded into corners. However that was, they
were of those nations of the more uncircumcised:
the flesh, and the Jews are ranked with them, and are as
near to sin for their sins as they; for all the house
of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart: they have
the sign, but not the thing signified, ch. iv. 4. They
are heathens in their hearts, strangers to God, and
enemies in their minds by wicked works. Their
hearts are disposed to idols, as the hearts of the un-
circumcised Gentiles are. Note, The seals of the
covenant, though they dignify us, and lay us under
obligations, will not save us, unless the temper of
our minds, and the tenor of our lives, agree with the
covenant. That only is circumcision, and that bap-
tism, which is of the heart, Rom. ii. 28, 29.

CHAP. X.

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

1. HEAR ye the word which the Lord
spaketh unto you, O house of Is-
rael: 2. Thus saith the Lord, Learn not
the way of the heathen, and be not dis-
mayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen
are dismayed at them. 3. For the customs
of the people are vain: for one cutteth
a tree out of the forest (the work of the
hands of the workman) with the axe: 4. They
deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it
with nails and with hammers, that it move
not. 5. They are upright as the palm-tree,
but speak not; they must needs be borne
because they cannot go. Be not afraid of
themselves; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. 6. Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. 7. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee. 8. But they are altogether brutish and foolish; the stock is a doctrine of vanities. 9. Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple is their clothing; they are all the work of cunning men. 10. But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting King; at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. 11. Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. 12. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. 13. When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures. 14. Every man is brutish in his knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image; for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. 15. They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish. 16. The portion of Jacob is not like them: for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: The Lord of hosts is his name.

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

1. A solemn charge given to the people of God, to turn them selves to their own and customs of the heathen. Let the house of Israel hear and receive this word from the God of Israel; "Learn not the way of the heathen, do not approve of it, nor think differently concerning it, much less imitate it, or recollect yourselves to it. Let not any of their customs stick in among you, (as they are apt to do insensibly,) nor mingle yourselves with your religion." Note, It ill becomes those that are taught of God, to learn the way of the heathen, and to think of worshipping the true God with such rites and ceremonies as they use in the worship of their false gods. See Deut. x. 29. "Thus shall ye do to every of the heathen to worship the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars; to them they gave divine honours, and from them they expected divine favours, and therefore, according as the signs of heaven were, whether they were auspicious or ominous, they thought themselves countenanced or discountenanced by their deities;" which made them observe those signs, the eclipses of the sun and moon, the conjunctions and oppositions of the planets, and all the unusual phenomena of the celestial globe, with a great deal of anxiety and trembling. Business was stopped, if any thing occurred that was thought to bode ill; if it did but thunder on their left hand, they were almost as if they had been thunderstruck. Now God would not have his people to be dismayed at the signs of heaven; to reverence the stars as deities, or to frighten themselves with any prefigurations grounded upon them. Let them fear the God of heaven, and keep up a reverence of his providence, and then they need not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the stars in their courses fight not against any that are at peace with God. The heathen are dismayed at these signs, for they know not better, or do not the house of Israel, that are taught of God, be so.

11. Divers good reasons given to enforce this charge.

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

(1.) Consider what the idol is that is worshipped; it is a tree cut out of the forest originally, it was fitted up by the hands of the workman, squared and sawed, and worked into shape; see Isa. xlv. 12, &c. But, after all, it was but the stock of a tree, fitter to make a gate-post of than any thing else. But to hide the wood, they deck it with silver and gold, they gild or lacquer it, or they deck it with gold and silver lace, or cloth of tissue. They fasten it to its place, which they themselves have assigned it, with nails and hammers, that it fall not, or be thrown down, or stolen away, v. 4. The image is made straight enough, and it cannot be denied but that the workman did his part, for it is upright as the palm-tree, (v. 5,) it looks stately, and stands up as if it were going to speak to you, but it cannot speak, it is a poor dumb creature; nor can it take one step forward your head, or a step behind your head, when you wish to shift its place, it must be carried in procession, for it cannot go. Very fitly does it come in here, "Be not afraid of them, any more than of the signs of heaven; be not afraid of incurring their displeasure, for they can do no evil; be not afraid of falling in favour, for neither is it in them to do good. If you think to mend the matter by mending the materials of which the idol is made, you cannot do it, it is so compounded as to be worshipped as wooden gods. The stock is a doctrine of vanities, v. 8. It teaches lies, teaches lies concerning God. It is an instruction of vanities, it is wood." It is probable that the idols of gold and silver had wood underneath for the substratum, and
then silver spread into plates is brought from Tur- 
insh, imported from beyond sea, and gold from 
Uphaz, or Phaz, which is sometimes rendered the 
fine gold, Ps. xxi. 3. A great deal of art is used 
and pains taken about it. They are not such ordi- 
inary, mechanical things that are employed about these, 
as about the golden gods, v. 3. These are cunning 
men, it is the work of the workman, the graver 
must do his part, when it has passed through the 
hands of the founder. Those were but decked 
here and there with silver and gold, these are silver 
and gold all over. And that these gods might be 
reverenced as kings, blue and fairful are their 
clothing, their crowns of royal robes, (v. 8.) 
and the ignorant worshippers, but makes the matter 
no better. For what is the idol when it is made, 
and when they have made the best they can of it? 
He tells us, (v. 14.) They are falsehood, they are 
not what they pretend to be, but a great cheat put 
upon the world. They are worshipped as the gods 
that give us breath and life and sense, whereas 
they are lifeless, senseless things themselves, and 
there is no breath in them; there is no spirit in them, 
(so the word is,) they are not animated or inhabited, 
as they are supposed to be, by any divine spirit or 
namen—divinity, they are so far from being gods, 
that they have not so much as the spirit of a beast 
that goes downward. They are vanity, and the 
work of errors, v. 15. Inquire into the use of them; 
you will find nothing, no help is to be expected from them, 
or any confidence put in them. They are a deceitful 
work, works of illusions, or mere muckeries: so 
some read the following clause. They delude 
those that put their trust in them, make fools of them, or, 
rather, they make fools of themselves. Inquire 
into the rise of them; they are the work of errors, 
great and small: the worst mistake, v. 16. Take 
those that pretended to reason were guilty of. They 
are the creatures of a deuded fancy, and the errors 
by which they were produced, they propagate among 
them, (2.) 
Inter hence what the idolaters are that 
worship these idols; (v. 8.) They are altogether brutish 
and foolish; they make them be like unto 
them, senseless and stupid, and there is no 
sense put in them, no use of reason, else they 
would never believe in such gods, no sense of honour, else 
they would never stoop to them, v. 14. Every man that 
makes or worships idols, is become brutish in 
his knowledge, brutish for want of knowledge, or 
brutish in that very thing which one would think 
they should be fully acquainted with; compare Jude 10. 
What they know naturally, what they cannot but 
know by the light of nature, in these things, 
as brute beasts, they corrupt themselves. Though 
in the works of creation they cannot but see the etern- 
al power and godhead of the Creator, yet they are 
become vain in their imaginations, not liking to 
retain God in their knowledge. See Rom. i. 21, 28. 
Nay, whereas they thought it a credit to their 
reason that they should know God, the greatest folly 
they could be guilty of. The world by wisdom 
know not God, 1 Cor. i. 21. Rom. i. 22. Every 
founder is himself confounded by the graven image; 
when he has made it by a mistake, he is more and 
more confirmed in his mistake by it; he is bewil- 
dered, bewitched, and cannotdisconnect himself 
from the snare; or, it is what he will one time or 
other, (1.) 
2. The God of Israel is the one only living 
and true God, and those that have him for their God, 
need not make their application to any other; may, 
to set up any other in competition with him is the 
greatest affront and injury that can be done him. 
Let the house of Israel cleave to the God of Is- 
srael, and serve and worship him only. For, 

(1.) He is a Nounch. Whatever men may se- 

in competition with him, there is none to be con- 

faced with him. The prophet turns from speak- 

ing with the utmost disdain of the idols of the hea- 

then, (as well he might,) to speak with the most 

profane and awful reverence of the God of Israel: 

ov. 6, 7. Thus, as there is none like unto thee, O Lord, none of all the heroes which the 

heathen have deified, and make such ado about; 

the dead men of whom they made dead images, and 
when they worshipped. "Some were deified and 

adored for their wisdom, but among all the wise 

men of the nations, the greatest philosophers or 

statesmen, as Apollo or Hermes, there is none like 

thee. Others were deified and adored for their 

domination, but in all their royalty," (so it may be read,) 

"among all their kings, as Saturn and Jupiter, there 

is none like unto thee." What is the glory of a 

man that invented an useful art, or founded a 

flourishing kingdom, (and these were grounds sufficient 

among the heathen to entitle men to an apostleship,) 

compared with the glory of him that is the Creator 
of the world, and that forms the spirit of man 

within him? What is the glory of the greatest prince 
or potentate, compared with the glory of him whose 

kingdom rules over all? He acknowledges, (v. 6.) 

O Lord, thou art great, infinite and immense, 

and thy name is great in might; thou hast all power, 

and art known to have it. Men's name is often be- 

hind their might, and they are thought to be greater 

than they are: for God's name, and his might, is 
greater than he really is. And therefore who would 

not fear thee, O King of nations? Who would not 

choose to worship such a God as this, that can do 

every thing, rather than such dead idols as the 

heathen worship, that can do nothing? Who would not 

be afraid of offending or forsaking a God whose 

name is great and glorious over all the nations, if 

they understood themselves aright, who is the King 

of the nations? Note, It is not only the house of Israel 

that is bound to worship the great Jehovah as the 

God of Israel, the King 

of saints, (Rev. xxv. 3, 4.) but all the families 

of the earth are bound to worship him as King of 

nations; for to him it appertains, to him it suits 

and agrees. 

Note, There is an admirable decency and congruity 
in the worship of the great Jehovah, that who is 

God alone, should alone be served; that he who 

is Lord of all, should be served by all; that he who 

is great, should be greatly feared, and greatly 

praised. (3.)

(2.) He is so evident as the idol's vanity, 

v. 16. They are the work of men's hands, and 

therefore nothing is more plain than that it is a jest 

to worship them, if that may be called a jest, which 

is so great an indignity to him that made us; but 

the Lord is the true God, the God of truth, he is God 

in truth. God Jehovah in truth, he is n.t a 

Counterfeit, and Pretender, as they are, but is truly 

what he has revealed himself to be; he is one we 

may depend upon, in whom, and by whom, we can- 

try him, and he can try, that he be done, (v. 11.) He is not 

in himself, he is the living God; he is Life, 

in himself, and is the Fountain of life to all the 

creatures. The gods of the heathen are dead 

things, worthless and useless, but ours is a living 

God, and hath immortality. (3.) Look upon him 

with relation to his creatures, he is a King, and 

absolute Monarch over all them, is their Owner and 

Ruler, have an unconquerable right to those 

and dispose of them; as a King, he protects 

the creatures, provides for their welfare, and 

preserves peace among them. He is an everlasting 

King. The councils of his kingdom were from 

everlasting, and the continuance of it will be to 

everlasting. He is a King of eternity. The idols 

whom they call their kings, are but of yesterday,
and shall be abolished; and the kings of the earth shall come up to it together, and shall themselves be in the dust; but the Lord shall reign for ever, the God, O Zion, upon all generations. Amen. HEB. xxvi. 12.

11 Now the Lord is the judge of the ends of the earth. Let us therefore stand in awe, and not be idle; for at his wrath the earth shall tremble, even the strongest and stoutest of the kings of the earth; nay, the earth, firmly as it is fixed, when he pleases, is made to quiver, and the rocks to tremble, Ps. civ. 32. Hab. iii. 6, 16. Though the nations should join together to contend with him, and unite their force, yet they would be found utterly unable not only to resist, but even to abide, his indignation. They cannot only not make head against it, for it would overcome them, but they cannot bear up under it, for it would overload them, Ps. lxxxvi. 7, 8. Nahum i. 6.

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

1. If we look back, we find that the whole world owed its original to him, as its first Cause. It is a common saying even among the heathen, 

He that sets up, he is another god, ought first to make another world.

While the heathen worship gods that are made, we worship the God that made us and all things. First, The earth is a body of vast bulk, has valuable treasures in its bowels, and more valuable fruit on its surface. It and them he has made by his power; and it is by no less than an infinite power, that it hangs upon nothing; Gen. iii. 5. John iii. 35. Ps. civ. 1: Behold the earth, &c. Posied by its own weight. Secondly, The world, the habitable part of the earth, is admirably fitted for the use and service of man, and he hath established it so by his wisdom, so that it continues serviceable in constant changes, and yet a continual stability from one generation to another. Therefore both the earth and the world are his, Ps. xxvii. 2. Thirdly, The heavens are wonderfully streched out, without any exactable extent, and it is by his discretion that they are so, and that the motions of the heavenly bodies are directed for the benefit of this lower world. These declare his glory, (Ps. xix. 1.) and oblige us to declare it, and not give that glory to the heavens, which is due to him that made them. [5.

9. If we look up, we see his providence to be a continued creation: (v. 13.) When he uttereth his voice, (gives the word of command,) there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, which are poured out on the earth, whether for judgment or mercy, as he intends them. When he uttereth his voice in the thunder, immediately there follow thunder-showers, in which there are a multitude of waters; and those come with a noise, as the margin reads it, Ps. lxxvii. 17. Thus the voice of thunder is the rain, 1 Kings xviii. 41. Nay, there are wonders done daily in the kingdom of nature without noise; He causes the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth, from all parts of the earth, even the most remote, and chiefly those that lie next the sea. All the earth pays the tribute of vapours, because all the earth receives the blessing of rain. And thus the most beautiful and powerful thing that is in the earth--the money in a kingdom, and the blood in the body, is continually circulating for the good of the whole. Those vapours produce wonders, for of them are formed lightnings for the rain and the winds which God from time to time brings forth out of his treasures, as there is occasion for them, directing them all in such measure and for such use as he thinks fit, as payments are made out of the treasury. All the auctors are so ready to serve God's purposes, that he seems to have treasures of them, that cannot be exhausted, and all drawn off at once, Ps. xcv. 7. God glories in the treasuries he has of these, Job xxxviii. 22, 23. This God can do; but which of the idols of the heathen can do the like? Note, There is no sort of weather but what furnishes us with a proof and instance of the wisdom and power of the great Creator.

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

8. The prophet, having thus compared the gods of the heathen with the God of Israel, (between whom there is no comparison,) reads the doom, the certain doom, of all those pretenders, and directs the Jews in God's name, to read it to the worshippers of idols, though they were their lords and masters; (v. 11.) Thus shall ye say unto them, and the Lord shall say unto his people, You shall not call me, the God ye have not made, the heaven and earth, under the highest heavens, which are defined, according to the distribution in the second commandment. These words in the original are not in the Hebrew, like all the rest, but in the Chaldee dialect, that the Jews in captivity might have this ready to say to the Chaldeans in their own language, when they tempted God to idolatry, and said, Who are your gods? We will never do that; for, (1.) They are counterfeit deities; they are no gods, for they have not made the heavens and the earth, and therefore are not entitled to our homage; nor are we indebted to them either for the products of the earth, or the influences of heaven, as we are to the God of Israel. The primitive Christians would say, when they were
urged to worship such a God. *Let him make a world, and he shall be my God.* While we have him to worship, who made heaven and earth, it is very absurd to worship any other. (2.) *They are con- dooned deities; they shall perish, the time shall come when they shall be no more respected as they are now, but shall be buried in oblivion, and they and their worshippers shall sink together; the earth shall no longer bear them, the heavens shall no longer cover them, but both shall abandon them.*

It is repeated, v. 15. *In the time of their visitation.*

When God comes to reckon with idolaters, he shall make them weary of their idols, and glad to be rid of them; they shall cast them to the moles and to the bats, Isa. ii. 20. Whatever runs against God and religion, will be run down at last.

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

In these verses, 1. The prophet threatens, in God's name, the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, v. 17, 18. The Jews that continued in their own land, after some were carried into captivity, were very secure; they thought themselves *inhabitants of a fortress,* their country was their *strong hold,* and, in their own conceit, impregnable; but they are here bid to think of leaving it: they must prepare to goaster their brethren, and pack up their effects in expectation of it; *"Gather up thy wares out of the land; contract thy affairs, and bring them into as little a compass as you can. Arise, depart, this is not your rest, Mic. ii. 10. Let not what you have lie scattered, for the Chaldeans will be upon you again, to be the executioners of them most beloved by you.* (v. 18.) *Behold, I will slit out the inhabitants of the land at this once: they have hitherto dropped out, by a few at a time, but one captivity more shall make a thorough riddance, and they shall be *stung* out as a stone out of a sling, so easily, so thoroughly shall they be cast out; nothing of them shall remain, they shall be thrown out with violence, and driven to a place at a great distance off, in a little time.* See this comparison used to signify an utter destruction, 1 Sam. xxxv. 29. Yet once more, God will shake their land, and shake the wicked out of it, II. b. xii. 26. He adds, *And I will distress them, that they may find it so.* He will not only throw them out hence, (that he may, and yet they may be easily elsewhere;) but, withersoever they go, trouble shall follow them: they shall be continually perplexed and straitened, and at a loss within themselves; and who or what can make these easy whom God will distress, whom he will distress, that they may find it so, that they may feel* that which they would not believe? They were often told of the weight of God's wrath, and their utter destruction, and made to feel it, or bear up under it: they were told that their sin would be their ruin, and they would not regard or credit what was told them; but now they shall find it so; and therefore God will pursue them with his judgments, that they may find it so, and be forced to acknowledge it. Note, Sooner or later, sinners will find it just so as the word of God has represented things to them, even to their better, and that the threatenings were not bugbears.

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

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

2. That there is no remedy but patience; they cannot help themselves, but must sit still, and abide it. *But I said,* when I was about to complain of my wound, *To what purpose is it to complain? This is a grief, and I must bear it as well as I can.* This is the language rather of a sufferer than of a gracious submission; of a patience *for force,* not a patience by *principle.* When I am in affliction, I should say, *This is an evil, and I will bear it, because it is the will of God that I should, because his wisdom has appointed this for me, and his grace will make it work for good to me.* This *is receiving evil at the hand of God, Job ii. 10.* But to say, *This is an evil, and I must bear it, because I cannot help it,* is a brutal patience, and argues a want of those good thoughts of God, which we should always have, even under our afflictions; saying, not only, God can and will do what he pleases, but, *Let him do what he pleases.*
which at first was but a tabernacle, and is now called so, as then it was sometimes called a temple. Their church is ruined, and all the supports of it fall. It was a general destruction of church and state, city and country, and there were none to repair these desolations: "My children are gone forth of the vineyard; they have no bounds, they have no wall, they are turned into captivity, so that as to me they are not; I am likely to be an outcast, and to perish for want of shelter; for there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, none of my children that used to do it for me, none to set up my curtains, none to do me any service." Jerusalem has none to guide her of all her sons. Isa. li. 18.

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

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

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

1. The prophet here acknowledges the sovereignty and dominion of the divine providence, that by it, and not by their own will and wisdom, the affairs of the church, and particularly the dispensations concerning the church, and particularly the dispensations of God, are directed and determined, (v. 23.) This is an article of our faith, which it is very proper for us to make confession of at the throne of grace, when we are complaining of an affliction, or suing for a mercy: "O Lord, I know, and believe, that the way of man is not in himself; Nebuchadnezzar did not come of himself against our land, but by the direction of a divine providence." We cannot of ourselves do any thing for our own relief, unless God work with us, and command deliverance for us, for it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps, though he knoweth the way to his kingdom, but God, and if he direct his ways, he shall have peace, and liberty, and to choose his own way. Those that had promised themselves a long enjoyment of their estates and possessions, were made to know by sad experience, when they were thrown cut by the Chaldeans, that the way of man is not in himself; the designs which men lay deep, and think well formed, are dashed to pieces in a moment. We are not able at all to direct our own way. Let this, that we are not at our own disposal, but under a divine direction; the event is often overruled, so as to be quite contrary to our intention and expectation. We are not masters of our own way, nor can we think that every thing should be according to our mind; we must therefore refer ourselves to God and acquiesce in his will. Some think that the prophet mentions this, here, with a design to make this comfortable use of it, that the providence of the Chaldean army being not in themselves, they can do no more than God permits them; he can set bounds to these proud waves, and say, Hitherto they shall come, and no further. And a quieting consideration it is, that the most formidable enemies have no power against us but what is given them from above.

2. He deprecates the divine wrath, that it might not fall upon God's Israel, (v. 24.) He speaks not for himself only, but on the behalf of his people; O Lord, correct me, but with judgment, in measure and with moderation, and in wisdom, no more than is necessary for the driving out of the foolishness that is bound up in our hearts: not in thine anger; however, because of the correction be, let it come from thy love, and be designed for our good, and made to work for good; not to bring us to nothing, but to bring us home to thyself. Let it not be according to the desert of our sins, but according to the designs of thy grace. Note, (1.) We cannot pray in faith that we may never be corrected, while we are conscious to ourselves that we need it, and deserve it, and know that as many as God loves, he corrects; (1 Cor. xi. 32.) the grace that is given for the general part of our people, afflicts all the members of the church of Christ. Is. li. 2. (2.) There is no greater thing than for us to be afraid of some measure of correction from the Lord. Say not, Lord, do not correct me, but, Lord, do not correct me in anger; for that will inflame wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery, that will bring us to nothing; we may bear the smart of his rod, but we cannot bear the weight of his wrath.

3. He implores the divine wrath against the oppressors and persecutors of Israel; (v. 25.) Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that knew thee not. This prayer does not come from a spirit of malice or revenge, nor is it intended to prescribe to God whom he should execute his judgments upon, or in what order; but, (1.) It is an appeal to his justice; "Lord, we are a provoking people; and are there not other nations that are more so? And shall we only be punished? We are thy children, and may expect a fatherly correction; but they are thine enemies, and against them we have reason to think thine indignation should be, not against us." This is God's usual method. The cup put into the hands of God's people is full of mixtures, mixtures of mercy; but the dregs of the cup are reserved for the wicked of the earth, let them wring them out, Ps. lxxv. 8. (2.) It is a prediction of G-d's judgments upon all the impious enemies of his church and kingdom. If judgment begin thus at the house of God, what shall be the end of these that then not his gospel? 1 Pet. iv. 17. See how the heathen are described, on whom God's fury shall be focu
ed out. 1. They are strangers to God, and are content to be so. They know him not, nor desire to know him. They are families that live without prayer, that have nothing of religion among them; they call not on God's name. Those that retain prayer, prove that they know not God; for they that know him will seek to him, and entertain his favour. 2. They are persecutors of the people of God, and reproachers to be so. They have eaten up Jacob, with as much greediness, as those that are hungry eat their necessary food; may, with more, for they never know when they have enough; they have devoured him and consumed him, and made his habitation desolate, that is, the land in which he lives, or the temple of God, which is his habitation among them. Note, What the heathen, in their rage and malice, do against the people of God, though therein he makes use of them as the instruments of his correction, yet he will, for that, make them the objects of his indignation. This prayer is taken from Ps. lxix. 6, 7.

CHAP. XI.

In this chapter, 1. God by the prophet puts the people in mind of the covenant he had made with their fathers, and how he had insisted upon it to be kept; and that the covenant, that they should be obedient to him, 1. 7. 2. He charges it upon them, that they, in succession to their fathers, and in confederacy among themselves, had obstinately rebelled against him, v. 8. 10. III. He threatens to punish them with utter ruin for their disobedience, especially for their idolatry; (v. 11, 13.) and tells them, that their idols should not save them, (v. 12.) that their prophets should not pray for them; (v. 14.) he also justifies his proceedings therein, they having brought all this mischief upon themselves by their own folly and willingness, v. 15., 17. IV. Here is an account of a conspiracy formed against Jeremiah by his fellow-citizens, the men of Anathoth; God's discovery of it to him; (v. 18, 19.) his prayer against them, (v. 20.) and a prediction of God's judgments upon them for it, v. 21., 25.

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

9. And the Lord said unto me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 10. They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant, which I made with their fathers.

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

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

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

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

2. This was not only laid before them then, but it was with the greatest importunity imaginable pressed upon them, v. 7. God not only commanded
it, but earnestly protested to, their fathers, when he brought them into covenant with himself. Moses incited it again and again, by precedent upon precedent, and line upon line.

3. This was the condition of the relation between them and God, which was so much their honour and privilege: "So shall ye be my people, and I will be your God; I will own you for mine, and will set you among the nations as your own possession, which intimate that if they refused to obey, they could no longer claim the benefit of the relation.

4. It was upon these terms that the land of Canaan was given them for a possession; Obey my voice, that I may perform the oath sworn to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, v. 3. God was ready to fulfil the promise, but then they must fulfil the condition: if not, the promise is void, and it is just with God to turn them out of it. Being brought in upon their good behaviour, they had no wrong done them if they were turned out upon their ill behaviour. Obedience was the rent reserved by the lease, with a power to re-enter for non-payment.

5. This obedience was not only made a condition of the blessings, but was required under the penalty of a curse. This is mentioned first, v. (v. 3) that they might, if possible, be awakened by the terror of the Lord; Cursed be the man, though it were but a single person, that obey not the words of this covenant, much more when it is the body of the nation, that rebels. There are curses of the covenant as well as blessings; and Moses set before them not only life and good, but death and evil; (Deut. xxx. 13.) so that they had fair warning given them of the fatal consequences of disobedience.

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

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

III. He charges them with breach of covenant, such a breach as amounted to a forfeiture of their charter, v. 8. God had said again and again, by his law and by his prophets, "Obey, my voice, do as you are bidden, and all shall be well:" yet they obeyed not; and because they were resolved not to submit to irs souls to God's commandments, they would not so much as incline their ears to them, but got as far as they could out of call; They caused every one in the imagination of their evil heart, followed their own inventions; every man did as his fancy and humour led him, right or wrong, lawful or unlawful, to do in the manner of their conversations; see ch. vii. 24. What then can they expect, but to fall under the curse of the covenant, since they would not comply with the commands and conditions of it; Therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, all the threatenings contained in it, because they did not what they were commanded. Note, The words of the covenant shall not fail, if God does not repent the curse of obedience qualify ourselves for the blessings of it, we shall by our disobedience bring ourselves under the curses of it.

That which aggravated their defection from God, and rebellion against him, was, that it was general, and as it were by consent, v. 9, 10. Jeremiah himself saw that many lived in open disobedience to God, and that the evil was worse than he thought of; A conspiracy is found among them, by him whose eye is upon the hidden works of darkness. There is a combination against God and religion, a dangerous design formed to overthrow God's government, and bring in the pretenders, the counterfeit deities. This intimates that they were wilful and deliberate in wickedness; they rebelled against God, not through inconsideration, but presumptuously, and with a high hand; that they were subtle and ingenious in wickedness, and carried on their plot against religion with a great deal of art and management; that they were linked together in the design, and, as is usual among conspirators, engaged to stand by one another in it, and to live and die together; they were resolved to go through with it. A cursed conspiracy! O that there were not the like in our day! Observe, 1. What the conspiracy was; they designed to overthrow divine revelation, and set that aside, and persuade people not to hear, not to heed, the words of God. They did all they could to derogate from the authority of the scriptures, and to lessen the value of them; they designed to draw people after other gods to serve them, to consult them as their oracles, and make appeal to them in the most solemn cases, as if they were the god, a light within their god, an infallible judge their god, saints and angels their gods, the god of this or the other nation shall be theirs; thus, under several disguises, they are in the same confederacy against the Lord and against his anointed. 2. Who were in the conspiracy; one who would have expected to find some foreigners ringleaders in it, the men of Jebus or Jericho; were they not the men of Jerusalem are in conspiracy with the men of Judah; city and country agree in this, however they may differ in other things. (2.) Those of this generation seem to be in conspiracy with those of the foregoing generation, to carry on the war from age to age against religion; They are turned back to the iniquities of their forfathers, and are risen up in their stead, a head against the Lord. No, (3.) The whole land of Jerusalem are in conspiracy with the men of Judah; city and country agree in this, however they may differ in other things. 14. In Jesus's time there had been a reformation, but after his death they returned to the idolatries which then they had renounced. (3.) Judah and Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes and the two that were often at daggers-drawing one with another, were yet in a conspiracy to break the covenant God had made with their fathers, even with the heads of all the twelve tribes. The house of Israel began the revolt, but the house of Judah soon came into the conspiracy. Now what else could
be expected, but that God should take severe methods, both for the chastising of these conspirators, and the crushing of this conspiracy; for none ever hardened his heart thus against God, and prospered. He that rolls this stone, it will return upon him.

11. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them. 12. Then shall the cities of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, go and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense; but they shall not save them at all in the time of their trouble. 13. For according to the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to that shameful thing, even altars to burn incense unto Baal. 14. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble.

15. What hath my beloved to do in my house, seeing she hath wrought lewdness with many, and the holy flesh is passed from thee? when thou dost evil, then thou rejoicest. 16. The Lord called thy name, A green olive-tree, fair, and of goodly fruit; with the noise of a great tumult hath he kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken. 17. For the Lord of hosts that planted thee hath pronounced evil against thee, for the evil of the house of Israel, and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves, to provoke me to anger, in offering incense unto Baal.

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

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

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

3. Their idols shall not help them. v. 12. They shall go and cry to the gods to whom they now offer incense, and put them in mind of the costly services wherewith they had honoured them, expecting they should now have relief from them, but in vain: they shall be sent to the gods whom they served; (Judg. x. 4. Deut. xxxii. 37. 38.) and what the better? They shall not save them at all, shall do nothing against them, but curse them, and give them any prospect of it; they shall not afford them least relief, or mitigation of their trouble. It is God only that is a Friend at need, a present powerful Help in time of trouble. The idols cannot help themselves; how then should they help their worshippers? Those that make idols of the world and the flesh, will in vain have recourse to them in a day of distress and trouble, the gods they, have done any real kindness to their worshippers, they would have done it for this people, who had renounced the true God to embrace them, had multiplied them according to the number of their cities; (v. 13.) in Jerusalem, according to the number of their streets; suspecting both their sufficiency and their readiness to help them, they must have many, lest a few would be too small a number to serve them, which have been dispensed in every corner, lest they should be left out when they had occasion for them. In Jerusalem, the city which God had chosen to put his name there, publicly in the streets of Jerusalem, in every street, they had altars to that shameful thing, that shame, even to Baal, which they ought to have been ashamed of, with which they did reproach the Lord, and bring confusion upon themselves. But now in their distress, their minds wander, and they have stood them in no stead. Note, Those that will not be ashamed of their commission of sin as a wicked thing, will be ashamed of their expectations from sin as a fruitless thing.

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

5. The profession they make of religion shall stand them in no stead, v. 15. They were originally God's beloved, his spouse, he was married to them by the covenant of peculiarity; even the unbelieving Jews are said to be beloved for the fathers' sakes, Rom. xi. 28. As such, they had a place in God's house, they had their prayer to worship in the courts of his temple, they partook of God's altar, they ate of the flesh of their peace-offerings, here called the holy flesh, which God had the honour of, and they had the comfort of. This they gloried in, and trusted to. What harm could come to those who were God's beloved, who were under the protection of his house? Even when they did evil, yet they were pardoned, and they in this, made a mighty noise of this. And when their evil was, (so the margin reads it.) when trouble came upon them, they rejoiced in this, and made this their confidence; but their confidence would deceive them, for God has rejected it.
they themselves have forfeited the privileges they so much boasted of. They have wronged leviness with many, have been guilty of spiritual whoredom, have worshipped many idols. And therefore, (1.) God's temple will yield them no protection; it is fit that the adulteress, especially when she has so often repeated her whoredoms, and is grown so impudent in them, and irreclaimable, should be put away, and turned out of my house. What canst thou do in my house? She is a scandal to it, and therefore it shall no longer be a shelter to her." (2.) God's altar will yield them no satisfaction, nor can they expect any comfort from that; _The holy flesh is passed from thee_, an end will soon be put to thy sacrifices, when the temple shall be laid in ruins; and where then will the holy flesh be that thou art so proud of? A holy heart will be a comfort to us when the holy flesh is passed from us; an inward principle of grace will make up the want of the outward means of grace. But wo unto us if the departure of the holy flesh be accompanied with the departure of the Holy Spirit.

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

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

The prophet Jeremiah has much in his writings concerning himself, much more than Isaiah had, the times he lived in being very troublesome. He here describes in its devices, as well as injunctions of his sorrows, which arose from those of his own city, Anathoth, a priest's city, and yet a malignant one. Observe here,

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

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

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

3. His appeal to God hereupon, v. 20. His eye is to God as the Lord of hosts that judges righteously.

It is matter of comfort too, when men deal unjustly with us, that we have a God to go to, who does and will plead the cause of injured innocence, and appear against the injuries. God's justice, which is a terror to the wicked, is a comfort to the godly. His eye is to him, as the God that tries the reins of the heart, and searches them, that he may know all the secrets of men; what are his thoughts and intents. He knew the integrity that was in Jeremiah's heart, and that he was not the man they represented him to be. He knew the wickedness that was in their hearts, though ever so cunningly concealed and disguised.

Now, (1.) He prays judgment against them; "Let me see thy vengeance on them, do justice between me and them in this matter," which is not unfrequently thought there was something of human frailty in this prayer; at least, Christ has taught us another lesson, both by precept and by pattern, which is, to pray for our persecutors. Others think it comes from a pure zeal for the glory of God, and a pious prophetic indignation against men that were, by profession, priests, the Lord's ministers, and yet were so desperately wicked as to fly out against one that did them no harm, merely for the service he did to God. This petition was a prediction that he should see God's vengeance on them. (2.) He refers himself entirely to the judgment of God; "Unto thee I have revealed my cause; to thee I have committed it, not asking or expecting to interest any other in it." Note, It is our comfort, when we are wronged, that we have an ear unto God, and can commit it to his judgment, and thus frame our petition in his definitive sentence; to subscribe, and not prescribe, to him.

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

Here is, (1.) Their crime recited, on which the sentence is grounded, v. 21. They sought the prophet's life, for they forbid him to prophesy upon pain of death; they were resolved either to silence him or priests at Anathoth, and ratify and second them; and were unable to silence him, stille them, or prevent them; this was, his prophesying in the name of the Lord, without license from them that were the governors of the city, which he was a member of: and not prophesying such smooth things as they always bespoke. Their forbidding him to prophesy, was, in effect, seeking his life; for it was seeking to defeat the end and business of his life, and rob him of the comfort and blessing that was designed him. It is as bad to God's faithful ministers to have their mouth stopped, as to have their breath stopped. But especially when it was resolved, that, if he did prophesy, as certainly he would, notwithstanding their inhibition, he should die by their hand; that would be accusers, judges, executors, and murderers. It used to be said, that a prophet could not perish but at Jerusalem, for there the great council sat; but so bitter were the men of Anathoth against Jeremiah, that they would undertake to be the death of him themselves. A prophet then shall find not only no honour, but no favour, in his own country.

(2.) The sentence passed upon them for this crime, v. 22. God's justice shall be avenged; let me alone to deal with them, I will visit this upon them; so the word is: God will inquire into it, and reckon for it. Two of God's four sore judgments shall serve to ruin their town. The sword shall devour their young men, though they were young priests, not men of war; their character shall not be their protection; and famine shall destroy the children, sons and daughters, that remain at home, which is a more grievous death than that by the sword, Lam. iv. 9. The destruction shall be final.

(v. 23.) There shall be no remnant of them left, none to be the seed of another generation; they sought Jeremiah's life, and therefore they shall die; they would destroy him, root and branch, that his name might be no more remembered, and therefore there shall be no remnant of them: and herein the Lord is righteous. Thus evil is brought upon them, even the year of their visitation; and that is evil enough, a recompense according to their deserts.

Then shall Jeremiah see his desire upon his enemies. Note, Their condition is sad, who have the prayers of good ministers and good people against them.

CHAP. XII.

In this chapter, we have, 1. The prophet's humble complaint to God of the success that wicked people had in their wicked practices, (v. 1, 2,) and his appeal to God concerning his innocence, integrity, and reason for his craft, and his justice; (v. 3,) that God would, for the sake of the public, bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end, v. 3, 4. 11. God's rebuke to the prophet for his meanness at his present troubles, bidding him prepare for greater, v. 5, 6. 11. A sad lamentation of the present desolable state of the Israel of God, v. 7, 10, 13. 11. An intimation of mercy to God's people, in a denunciation of wrath against their neighbours that helped forward their affliction, that they should be plucked out, but with a promise, that if they would at last join themselves with the people of God, they should come in sharers with them in their privileges, v. 14, 17.

1. Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefor are all they happy that deal very treacherously? 2. Thou hast planted them; yea, they have taken root: they grow; yea, they bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins. 3. But thou, O Lord, knowest me; thou hast seen me, and tried my heart toward thee; pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter. 4. How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end. 5. If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearyed thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they weary
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There, then how will thou do in the swelling of Jordan? 6. For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.

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

1. What liberty he humbly took, and was graciously allowed him, to reason with God concerning his judgment, v. 1. He is about to plead with God, not to quarrel with him, or find fault with his providence, but to show a truth of justice and mercy, which he resolves to abide by in managing this argument; Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee. Thus he arms himself against the temptation wherewith he was assaulted, to envy the prosperity of the wicked, before he entered into a parley with it. Note, When we are most in the dark concerning the meaning of God's dispensations, we must still resolve to keep up right thoughts of God, and must be confident of this, that he never did, nor ever will do, the least wrong to any of his creatures; even when his judgments are unsearchable as a great deep, and altogether unaccountable, yet his righteousness is as conspicuous and unmovable as the great mountains, Ps. xxxvi. 6. Though sometimes clouds and darkness are round about him, yet justice and judgment are always the habituation of his throne, Ps. xciii. 2. When we find it hard to understand particular providences, we must have recourse to general truths as our first principles, and abide by them; however it be, the Lord is righteous; see Ps. lxiii. 1. And we must acknowledge it to him, as the prophet here, even when we plead with him, as those that have no thoughts of contradicting, but of laying before him, instances, that he may be satisfied when he speaks. Note, However we may see cause for our own information to plead with God, yet it becomes us to own that, whatever he says or does, he is in the right.

II. What it was in the dispensations of Divine Providence, that he stumbled at, and that he thought would bear a debate. It was that which has been a temptation to many wise and good men, and such a one as they had hardly got over. 1. They see the designs and projects of wicked people successful: The way of the wicked prospect; they compose their malicious designs, and gain their point. 2. They see their affairs and concerns in a good posture; They are happy, happy as the world can make them, though they deal treacherously, very treacherously. 3. Their riches are chiefly meant, (as appears, v. 2.) who dissemble in their good professions, and depart from their good beginnings and good promises, and in both they deal treacherously, very treacherously.

It has been said, that men cannot expect to prosper who are unjust and dishonest in their dealings; but they deal treacherously, and yet they are happy. He shows (v. 3.) both their prosperity, and their abuse of their prosperity. 1. God had been very indulgent to them, and they went got beforehand in the world; "They are planted in a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and thou hast planted them; nay, thou didst cast out the heathen to plant them," Ps. xlv. 2. - lxxx. 8. Many a tree is planted, that yet never grows, or comes to anything; but they have taken root, their prosperity seems to be confirmed and settled; they take root in the earth, for there they fix themselves, and thence they draw the sap of all their satisfaction. Yet many a tree is planted, which, when you see it grow, yea, they bring forth fruit; their families are built up, they live high, and spend at a great rate; and all this was owing to the benignity of the Divine Providence, which smiled upon them, Ps. xlviii. 7. (2.) Thus God had favored them, though they had dealt treacherously with him: Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins. It is a paradox, yet the sense is, he speaks by the Spirit of prophecy, without which it is not safe to charge men with hypocrisy, whose appearances are plausible. Observe, [1.] Though they cared not for thinking of God, nor had any sincere affection to him, yet they could easily persuade themselves to speak of him frequently, and with an air of seriousness. Pity from the teeth outward is not difficult the sight that its object is not that are not Israelites indeed. [2.] Though they had on all occasions the name of God ready in their mouth, and accustomed meditated to themselves those forms of speech that savored of piety, yet they could not persuade themselves to keep up the fear of God in their hearts. The form of godliness should engage us to keep up the power of it; but with them it did not so.

III. What comfort he had in appealing to God concerning his own integrity; (v. 5.) But thou, O Lord, knowest me. Probably, the wicked men he complains of were forward to reproach and censure him, (ch. xviii. 18.) in reference to which, this was his comfort, that God was a Witness of his integrity. God knew he was not such a one as they were, who had God near in their mouths, but far from their reins; nor such a one as they took him to be, and represented him, a deceiver and false prophet; they that thus abused him did not know him; (1 Cor. ii. 8.) But thou, O Lord, knowest me, though they think me not worth their notice.

1. Observe what the matter is, concerning which he appeals to God, Thou knowest my heart toward thee. Note, We are as our hearts are, and our hearts are good or bad, according as they are, or are not, toward God; and this is that therefore concerning which we should examine ourselves, that we may approve ourselves to God. 2. The cognizance to which he appeals; "Thou knowest me better than I know myself, not by hearsay or report, for thou hast seen me, not with a transient glance, but thou hast tried me heart." God's knowledge is as clear and exact and certain, as if he had made the most strict scrutiny. Note, The God with whom we have to do, perfectly knows how our hearts are toward him. He knows both the guilt of the hypocrite, and the sincerity of the upright.

IV. He prays that God would turn his hand against these wicked people, and not suffer them to prosper always, though they were our hearts are, and our hearts are good or bad, according as they are, or are not, toward God; and this is that therefore concerning which we should examine ourselves, that we may approve ourselves to God. 2. The cognizance to which he appeals; "Thou knowest me better than I know myself, not by hearsay or report, for thou hast seen me, not with a transient glance, but thou hast tried me heart." God's knowledge is as clear and exact and certain, as if he had made the most strict scrutiny. Note, The God with whom we have to do, perfectly knows how our hearts are toward him. He knows both the guilt of the hypocrite, and the sincerity of the upright.

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would be pulled out of their land, because they had brought ruin upon the land, and the longer they continued in it, the more would their plagues be their portion; (v. 4.) "How long shall the land mourn (as it does under the judgments of God inflicted upon it) for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein? Lord, shall they prosper themselves, that ruin all about them?" 1 See here what the judgment was, which the land was now groaning under: The herbs of every field wither, the grass is burnt up, and all the produce of the ground shall be withered. Therefore the beasts are consumed, and the birds, 1 Kings xviii. 5. This was the effect of a long drought, or want of rain, which happened, as it should seem, at the latter end of Josiah's reign, and the beginning of Jehoiakim's; it is mentioned, ch. iii. 3.—xiii. 10, 12, and more fully afterwards, ch. xiv. If they would have been brought to repentance by this lesser judgment, the greater had been prevented. Now, why was it that this fruitful land was turned into barrenness, but for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein? Ps. civ. 34. Therefore the prophet prays that these wicked people might die for their own sin, and that the whole nation might not suffer for it. 2 See here what was the language of their wickedness. They said, He shall not see that which shall befall him, and his matchless youth and beauty shall wither away. The root of hypocrisy, therefore God is far from their reins, though near in their mouth, because they say, How doth God know? Ps. lxiii. 11. Job xxiii. 13. He knows not what way we take, nor what it will end in. Or, Jeremiah shalt not see our last end; whatever he pretends, when he asks us what shall be in the end hereof, he cannot himself foresee it. They looked upon him as a false prophet. Or, "Whatever it is, he shall not live to see it, for we will be the death of him," ch. xi. 21. Note, (1.) Men's setting their latter end at a great distance, or looking upon it as uncertain, is at the bottom of all their wickedness, Lam. i. 9. (2.) The whole creation groans under the burden of the sin of man, Rom. viii. 22. It is for this, that the earth mourns, (so it may be read,) cursed is the ground for this sake. V. He acquaints us with the answer God gave to those complaints of his, v. 5, 6. We often find the prophets admonished, whose business it was to admonish others, as Isa. viii. 11. Ministers have lessons to learn, as well as lessons to teach, and must themselves hear God's voice, and preach to themselves. Jeremiah complained much of their uncleanness, and made them know that, notwithstanding that, they prospered. Now this seems to be an answer to that complaint. 1. It is allowed that he had cause to complain; (v. 6.) "Thy brethren, the priests of Anathoth, that are of the house of thy father, who ought to have protected thee, and pretended to do so, even they have dealt treacherously with thee, have been false to thee, and under colour of zeal of the Lord, they have designedly done thee all the mischief they could; they have called a multitude after thee, raised the mob upon thee, and incensed the common people against thee, to whom they have endeavored, by all arts possible, to render thee despicable or odious, while at the same time they pretend that they had no design to persecute thee, or deprive thee of the liberty and favor they would been content to believe, though they speak fair words to thee. They seem to be thy friends, but are really thine enemies." Note, God's faithful servants must not think it at all strange, if their foes be those of their own house, (Matth. x. 36.) and if those they expect kindness from, prove such as they can put no confidence in, Mic. vii. 5. 2. Yet he is told that he carried the matter too far. (4.) He laid the unkindness of his countrymen too much to heart. They wore him, because it was in a land of peace wherein he trusted, v. 5. It was very grievous to him to be thus hated and abused by his own kindred. This was the more bitter, for his spirit was sunk and overwhelmed with it, so that he was in great agitation and distress about it. Nay, he was discouraged in his work by it, began to be weary of prophesying, and to think of giving it up. (2.) He did not consider that this was but the beginning of his sorrow, and that he had sorcer trials yet before him; and whereas he should endeavour by a lasting bearing up under all, to be more raised for greater, by his unacquaintance under this he did but unfix himself for what further lay before him. If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, and run thee quite out of breath, then how wilt thou contend with horses? If the injuries done him by the men of Anathoth made such an impression upon him, what would he do when the princes and chief priests at Jerusalem should set upon him with their power, as they did afterward, ch. xx. xxxiii. 2. If he was so soon tired in a land of peace, where there was little noise or peril, what would he do in the swellings of Jordan, when that overflows all its banks, and frightens even lions out of their thickets? ch. xiii. 19. Note, (1.) While we are in this world, we must expect trials and difficulties; but let us trust in the Lord, and the danger of being run down. (2.) God's usual method being to begin with lesser trials, it is our wisdom to expect greater than any we have yet met with. We may be called out to contend with horned men, and the sons of Ammon may perhaps be reserved for the last encounter. (3.) It highly concerns us to prepare for such trials, and to consider what we should do in them. How shall we preserve our integrity and peace, when we come to the swellings of Jordan? (4.) In order to our preparation for greater and further trials, we are concerned to approve ourselves well in present lesser trials, to keep up our spirits, keep hold of the promise, keep in our way, with our eye upon the prize, so run that we may obtain it. Some good interpreters understand this as spoken to the people, who were very secure, and careless of the threatened judgments. If they have been so humbled and impoverished by lesser calamities, wasted by the Assyrians; if the Ammonites and Moabites, who were their brethren, and with whom they were in league, if these proved false to them, (as undoubtedly they would,) then how would they be able to deal with such a powerful adversary as the Chaldees? Would they bear up their head against that invasion which should come like the swellings of Jordan? 7. I have forsaken my house, I have left my heritage; I have given the dearly-beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies. 8. My heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against me: therefore have I hated it. 9. My heritage is unto me as a speckled bird; the birds round about are against her; come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour. 10. Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. 11. They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourneth unto me; the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart. 12. The spoilers are come upon all high places.
through the wilderness: for the sword of the Lord shall devour from the one end of the land even to the other end of the land: no flesh shall have peace. 13. They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns; they have put themselves to pain, but shall not profit; and they shall be ashamed of your revenues, because of the fierce anger of the Lord.

The people of the Jews are here marked for ruin.

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

2. The enemies are here brought in, falling upon them, and saying them desolate. And some think it is upon this account that they are compared to a speckled bird, because fowls make a noise about a bird of an odd, unusual colour. God's people are among the first; the first deeds of the ground, as a speckled bird; but this people had by their own folly made themselves so; and the beasts and birds are called and commissioned to prey upon them. Let all the birds round be against her, for God has forsaken her, and with them let all the beasts of the field come to devour. Those that have made a prey of others, shall themselves be made a prey, and not least of all the beasts of the field. This verse is a very much greater mystery of Judah and Jerusalem, that the desolatiot brought upon them was by order from heaven. The birds and beasts are perhaps called to feast upon the bodies of the slain, as in St. John's vision, Rev. xix. 17.

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

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

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

3. See whence all this misery comes. (1.) It comes from the displeasure of God. It is the sword of the Lord. The sword of the Lord devours, (v. 12.) The Lord will keep close to him, the sword of their protectors and deliverers is the sword of the Lord, witness that of Gideon; but when they have forsaken him, so that he is become their Enemy, and fights against them, then the sword of their invaders and destroyers is become the sword of the Lord; witness this of the Chaldeans. It is because of the fierce anger of the Lord, which kindled this fire among them, and made their enemies so furious. And who may stand before him, when he is angry? (2.) It is their sin that has
made God their Enemy, particularly their incorrigible sins under former rebukes; (v. 11.) "The land mourns unto me, the country that lies desolate does, as it were, pour out its complaint before God, and humbles itself under his hand; but the inhabitants are so senseless and stupid, that none of them lays it to heart; they do not mourn to God, but are unaffected with his displeasure, while their God and their salvation is nigh at hand. Note, When God's hand is lifted up, and men will not see, it shall be laid low, and they shall be made to feel, Isa. xxvi. 11.

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

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

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

1. What the quarrel was that God had with them. They were his evil neighbours, v. 14. evil neighbours to his church, and what they did against it, he took as done against himself, and therefore called them his evil neighbours, that should have been neighbourly to Israel, but were quite otherwise. Note, It is often the lot of good people to live among bad neighbours, that are unkind and provoking to them; and it is bad indeed when they are so. These evil neighbours were the Moabites, Ammonites, the Edomites, Egyptians, that had been evil neighbours to Israel in helping them to devour God's, and now they helped to make them desolate, and joined with the Chaldeans against them. It is just with God to make those the instruments of trouble to us, whom we have made instruments of sin. That which God lays to their charge, is, that they have meddled with the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit; they unjustly sized that which was none of their own; nay, they sacrilegiously turned that to their own use, which was intended for the peculiar blessing of God's peculiar people. He then said, 'Touch not mine anointed, and sin against me, Touch not their inheritance; it is at your peril if you do.' Not only the persons, but the estates, of God's people are under his protection.

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAP. XIII.

The prophet is attempting to awaken this sense and stubborn people to repentance, by the consideration of the judgments of God that were coming upon them. He is to tell them, 1. By the sign of a girdle spoiled, that their pride would be stained, v. 1, 11. By the sign of bottles filled with wine, that their contentedness would be blasted, v. 12. 14. III. In consideration hereof, he is to call them to repent, and humble themselves, v. 15. 21. IV. He is to convince them that it is for their obstinacy and incorrigibility that the judgments of God are so prolonged, and brought to extremity, v. 22. 27.

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

1. A sign, the marring of a girdle which the prophet had worn for some time, by hiding it in a hole of a rock, near the river Euphrates. It was usual with the prophets to teach by signs, that a stupid, unthinking people might be brought to consider and believe, and be affected with what was thus set before them. 1. He was to wear a linen girdle for some time, v. 1. 2. Some think he wore it under his clothes, because it was linen, and it is said to cleave to his loins. v. 11. It should rather seem to be worn upon his clothes, for it was worn for a name and a praise, and probably was a fine sash, such as officers wear, and such as are commonly worn at this day in the eastern nations. He must not put it in water, but wear it as it was, that it might be the stronger, and less likely to rot linen wastes almost as much with washing as with wearing. Being wet, it was the more stiff, and less apt to ply, yet he must make a shift to wear it. Probably, it was very fine linen, which will wear long without washing. The prophet, like John Baptist, was none of these that wore soft clothing.
and therefore it would be the more strange to see him with a linen girdle on, who probably used to wear a leather one. 2. After he had worn this linen girdle for some time, he must go and hide it in a hole of a rock, (v. 4.) by the water's side, where, when the water was high, it would be wet, and when it fell, would grow dry again, and by that means would not rot, and therefore it is a probable way. 3. After many days, he must look for it, and he should find it quite spoiled, gone all to rags, and good for nothing, v. 7. It has been of old a question among interpreters, whether this was really done, so as to be seen and observed by the people, or only in a dream or vision, so as to go no further than the prophet's own mind. It seems hard to imagine that he should be sent on so long journeys as to the river Euphrates, each of which would take him up some weeks together, when he could so ill be spared at home; for that reason, most incline to think the journey, at least, was only in vision, like that of Ezekiel, from the captivity in Chaldea to Jerusalem, (Ezek. viii. 3.) and from thence back to Chaldea, ch. xx. 24. The explanation of this sign is given only to the prophet himself, (v. 8.) not to the people, the sign not being public. But there being, it is probable, at that time, great conve...
even the fathers and the sons together, saith the Lord; I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them. 15. Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken. 16. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. 17. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive. 18. Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves, sit down; for your principalities shall come down, even the crown of your glory. 19. The cities of the south shall be shut up, and none shall open them; Judah shall be carried away captive all of it, it shall be wholly carried captive. 20. Lift up your eyes, and behold that come from the north; where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock? 21. What will thou say when he shall punish thee? (for thou hast taught them to be captains, and as chief over thee;) shall not sorrows take thee, as a woman in travail? 22. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Every bottle shall be filled with wine; those that by their sins have made themselves vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, shall be filled with the wrath of God, as a bottle is with wine, and as eyes with meditation: so shall the unsearchable and inexhaustible for glory shall be filled with mercy and glory, so they shall be full of the fury of the Lord, (Isa. li. 20.) and they shall be bristled as bottles; and as old bottles into which new wine is put, they shall burst and be broken to pieces; (Matth. ix. 17.) or, They shall have their heads as full of wine as bottles are; for so it is explained, v. 13. They shall be filled with drunkenness; (Isa. II. 17.) It is probable that this was a common proverb among them, applied divers ways; but they, not being aware of the prophet's meaning in it, ridiculed him for it; "Do we not certainly know that every bottle shall be filled with wine? What strange thing is there in that? Tell us something that we did not know before." Perhaps they were thus touchy with the prophet, because they apprehended on this to be a reflection upon them for their drunkenness, and probably, it was in part so intended. They love flagons of wine, Hos. iii. 1. They made their king sick with bottles of wine, Hos. vii. 5. Their watchmen were all for wine, Is. lvi. 15. They love their false prophets, that prophesied to them of wine, (Mic. ii. 11.) that bid them be merry; for that they should never want their bottle to make them so. "Well," says the prophet, "you shall have your bottles full of wine, but not such wine as you desire." They suspected that he had some mystical meaning in it, which prophesied no good concerning them, but evil; and he owns that so he had. What he meant was this, 1. That they should be as giddy as men in drink. A drunken man is fitly compared to a bottle or cask full of wine; for when the wine is in, the wit, and wisdom, and virtue, and all that is good for anything, are out. Now God threatens, (v. 13.) that they shall all be filled with drunkenness; they shall be filled with all the confusion in their counsels, shall fall in all their talk, and stagger in all their motions; they shall not know what they say or do, much less what they should say or do. They shall be sick of all their enjoyments, and throw them up as drunken men do, Job xx. 15. They shall fall into a slumber, and be utterly unable to help themselves, and, like men that have drunk away their reason, shall lie at the mercy, and as they compose themselves to the thoughts of all about them. And this shall be the condition not of some among them; (if any had been sober, they might have helped the rest;) but even the kings that sit upon the throne of David, that should have been like their father David, who was wise as an angel of God, shall be thus intoxicated. Their priests and prophets too, their false prophets, that pretended to guide them, were as indulgent of their lusts, and therefore were just as much deprived of their senses, as any other. Nay, and all the inhabitants both of the land and of Jerusalem were as far gone as they. Whom God will destroy, he infatuates. 2. That, being giddy, they should run upon one another. The cup of the wine of the Lord's fury shall throw them not only into a lethargy, so that they shall not know where to strike; but as one another, but into a perfect frenzy, so that they shall do mischief to themselves and one another; (v. 14.) I will dash a man against his brother. Not only their drunken follies, but their drunken fratres, shall help to ruin them. Drunken men are often quarrelsome, and upon that account they have too and sorrow; (Prov. xxii. 29, 30. ) so their sin is their punishment, and is so gone. God scat as an spirit into families and neighbourhoods, (as Judg. ix. 23. ) which made them jealous of, and spiteful towards, one another; so that the fathers and sons went together by the ears, and were ready to pull one another to pieces, which made them all an easy prey to the common enemy. This decree against them being gone forth, God says, I will not pity, but will destroy them; for they will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy one another; see Hab. ii. 15. 16. II. They are publicly God's witness to every of his controversy with them; (v. 9.) let them moritfy and forsake this sin, and God will let fall his controversy. "Be not proud; when God speaks to you by his prophets, do not think yourselves too good to be taught; be not scornful, be not willful, let not your hearts rise against the word, nor slight the messengers that bring it you. When God is coming forth against you with just provocation, (God by the he speaks,) be not secure when he threatens, be not impatient when he strikes, for pride is at the bottom of both." It is the great God that has spoken, whose authority is incontestable, whose power is irresistible; therefore bow to what he says, and be no proud, as you have been. They must not be proud, for, "They must not exalt themselves, and study how to do him honour;'"Give glory to the Lord your God, and not to your idols, nor to other gods.' Give him glory, by confessing your sins, owning yourselves guilty before him, and accepting the punishment of your iniquity, v. 16. Give him glory by a sincere repentance and reformation." Then, and not till
then, we begin to live as we should, and to some good purpose, when we begin to give glory to the Lord our God; to make his honour your chief end, and to seek it accordingly. "Do this quickly, while your space to repent is continued to you; before he cause darkness, before he bring his judgments upon you, which you will see no way of escaping." Note, Darkness is the dawning of that which will be responsible for, in giving glory to God. When those that by the fourth vial were scourched with heat, referred not, to give glory to God, the next vial filled them with darkness, Rev. xvi. 9, 10. The aggravation of the darkness here threatened, is, (1.) That their attempts to escape shall hasten their ruin; Their feet shall stumble when they are making all the haste they can to fly from the day of the great anger of God, which shall fall, and be unable to get up again. Note, Those that think to outrun the judgment of God, will find their road impassable; let them make the best of their way, they can make nothing of it, the judgments that pursue them will overtake them; their way is dark and slippery, Ps. xxxv. 6. And therefore, before it comes to that extremity, it is our wisdom to give glory to him, and so make peace with him; to fly to his mercy, and then there will be no occasion to fly from his justice. (2.) That their hopes of a better state of things will be disappointed; While ye look for light, for comfort and relief, he will turn it into the shadow of death, which is very dismal and terrible, and make it gross darkness, like that of Egypt, when Pharaoh continued to refuse to let his people go. See that such might be felt. The expectation of impenitent sinners perishes, when they die, and think to have it satisfied.

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

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

1. It will be the prophet's unspeakable grief; (v. 18.) "If you will not hear it, will not submit to the word, but continue refractory, not only mine eye, but my soul, shall see in secret places." Note, The obstinacy of people, in refusing to hear the word of God, will be a heart-breaking to their poor ministers, who know something of the terrors of the Lord and the worth of souls, and are so far from desiring, that they tremble at, the thoughts of the death of sinners. His grief for it was undissembled, his soul wept; and void of affectation, for he knew of it, and knew it in secret places, where no eye saw him but his who is all eye. He would mingle his tears not only with his public preaching, but with his private devotions. Nay, thoughts of their case would make him melancholy, and he would become a perfect recluse. It would grieve him, (1.) To see their sins unrepented of; "My soul shall weep for your pride, your haughtiness, and stubbornness, and vain confidence." Note, The sins of others should be matter of sorrow to us. We must mourn for that which we cannot mend, and mourn the more for it, because we cannot mend it. (2.) To see their vanity past redress and remedy; "Mine eyes shall be red with a tear, that will not come by the pouring of a bottle; or will issue from the eye, as a tear, but not so much because of my relations, friends, and neighbours, as in sight of God's judgment, and of the Lord's flock, his people, and the sheep of his pasture, are carried away captive." That should all ways grieve us most, by which God's honour suffers, and the interest of his kingdom is weakened.

2. It will be their own inevitable ruin, v. 19.—21. (1.) The land shall be laid waste; The cities of the south shall be destroyed; The cities of Judah lay in the southern part of the land of Canaan, and shall be strictly besieged by the enemy, so that there shall be no going in and out; or they shall be deserted by the inhabitants, that there shall be none to go in and out. Some understand it of the cities of Egypt, which was south from Judah; the places there, whence they expected succours, shall fail them, and they shall find no access to them. (2.) Their enemies shall bring them into a foreign country, there to live in slavery; Judah shall be carried away captive. Some were already carried off, which they hoped might serve to answer the prediction, and that the residue should still be left; no, it shall be carried away all of it; God will make a full end with them, it shall be totally carried away. See it was in the last captivity under Zedekiah, because they would not hear God. (3.) The enemy was now at hand, that should do this; (v. 20.) "Lift up your eyes, I see them upon their march, and you may, if you will, behold them that come from the north, from the land of the Chaldeans; see how fast they advance, how fierce they appear." Upon this, he addresses himself to the king and his council, (by which he means the prophets, masculine, to the city or state.) (v. 21.) "What will you do now with the people which is committed to your charge, and which you ought to protect? Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock? Whither canst thou bring them now for shelter? How can they escape these raving wolves?" Magistrates must look upon themselves as shepherds, and those that are under their charge as their flock, and they must be so, and take care of, and must give an account of; they must take delight in them as their beautiful flock, and consider what to do for their safety in times of public danger. Masters of families, who neglect their children, and suffer them to perish for want of a good education, and ministers who neglect their people, should think, when they hear God putting this question to them, Where is the flock that was given thee? that beautiful flock? It is starved, it is left exposed to the haunts of prey. What account will thou give of them when the Chief Shepherd shall appear? [2.] What have ye to object against the equity of God's proceedings? What will thou say when he shall visit upon thee the former days? Thou canst not say, thou hast heard God putting this question to them, They that flatter themselves with false hopes of impunity, what will they say! What confusion will cover their faces, when they shall find themselves deceived, and that God punishes them! [3.] What thoughts will you now have of your own fly, in giving the Chaldeans such power over you, by seeking to them for assistance, and joining in league with them? This distress, but because the mind against itself to be captives, and to become the head." Hezekiah began, when he showed his treasures to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, tempting him thereby to come and plunder him. Those who, having a God to trust, court foreign
alliances, and enmity in them, do but make rods for themselves, and teach their neighbours how to become their masters. [4] "How will you bear the trouble that is at the door? Shall not sorrows take thee as a woman in travail? Sorrows which thou couldst not escape or put off, extremity of sorrow which destroys all the beauty of a woman in travail, that they were not expected before, and that there is no man-child to be born, the joy of which shall make them afterward to be forgotten."

22. And if thou say in thy heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare. 23. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leprous his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. 24. Therefore will I scatter them as the stubble that passeth away by the wind of the wilderness. 25. This is thy lot, the portion of thy measures from me, saith the Lord; because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood. 26. Therefore will I discover thy skirts upon thy face, that thy shame may appear. 27. I have seen thine adulteries, and thy neighings, the lewdness of thy whoredom, and thine abominations on the hills in the fields. 28. Unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?

Here is

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

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

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

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

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

3. It is for their treacherous departures from the God of truth, and dependence on lying vanities; (v. 25.) "This is thy lot, to be scattered and driven away; this is the portion of thy measures from me, the punishment assigned thee as by line and measure; this shall be thy share of the miseries of this world; expounded to thee through their hearts' lusts, that because thou hast forgotten me, the favours I have bestowed upon thee, and the obligations thou art under to me; thou hast no sense, no remembrance, of these." Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of all sin, as the remembrance of our Creator betimes is the happy and hopeful beginning of a holy life. "Having forgotten me, thou hast trusted in falsehood, in idleness, in Egypt and in Assyria, in the self-flatteries of a deceitful heart." Whatever those trust to, that forsake God, they will find it a broken reed, a broken earthen
4. It is for their idolatry, their spiritual whore-
dom, that sin which is of all other most pro-
voking to the jealous God. Therefore they are ex-
posed to a shameful calamity, (v. 26.) because they
have been guilty of a shameful iniquity, and yet are
shameless in it; (v. 27.) "I have seen thine abuses,
time inordinate, fancy for strange gods, which
they hast been impatient for the gratification of,
and lost even weighed after it; even the lewdness of thy
whoredoms, time impudence and insatiableness in
them, thy eager worshipping of idols on the hils in
the fields, upon the high places. This is that for
which a zv. is denounced against thee, O Jerusa-
lem; nay, and many woes."

V. Here is an affectionate expostulation with
them, to provoke them to repentance. 1. He
reasons with them concerning the thing itself; Will
thou not be made clean? Note, It is the great con-
cern of those who are polluted by sin, to be made
clean, by repentance and faith, and universal re-
formation. The reason why sinners are not made
clean, is, because they will not be made clean; and
herz act most unreasonably, "Wilt thou not be made clean?
Surely thou wilt at length be persuaded to wash thee, and make thee clean, and be so
wise for thyself." 2. Concerning the time of it;
When shall it once be? Note, It is an instance of the
wonderful grace of God, that he desires the repen-
tance and conversion of sinners, and thinks the time
long till they are brought to it; but it is an instance of the wonderful folly of sinners, that they put that
effort from time to time, which is of such absolute
necessity, that, if it be not done some time, they are
certainly undone for ever. They do not say that
they will never be cleansed, but not yet; they will
delay it to a more convenient season, but cannot tell
us when it shall once be.

CHAP. XIV.

This chapter was penned upon occasion of a great drought,
for want of rain. This judgment began in the latter end
of Josiah's reign, but, as it should seem, continued in the
beginning of Jehoiakim's; for hence the judgments are
said to have been of greater coming, if not prevented
by repentance. This calamity was mentioned several
times before, but here, in this chapter, more fully. Here
is, 1. A melancholy description of it, v. 1. 6. 11.
A people was in great distress, and to and fro in
mercy to their land, v. 7. 9. 11. A severe threatening,
that God would proceed in his controversy, because they proceeded in their iniquity, v. 10. 12.
2. The prophet's accusing the people, by laying the
blame on their false prophets; and the doom passed upon the
deceivers and the deceived, v. 13. 16. 11. Direction
given to the prophet, instead of interceding for them, to
lament them, yet he continued to intercede for them,
v. 17. 22.

THE word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth. 2.
Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof lan-
guish; they are black unto the ground; and the
cry of Jerusalem is gone up. 3. And
their nobles have sent their little ones to the
waters: they came to the pits, and found no
water; they returned with the vessels empty;
they were ashamed and confounded, and
covered their heads. 4. Because the ground
is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth,
the ploughmen were ashamed, they covered
their heads. 5. Yea, the hind also calved
in the field, and forsook it, because there
was no grass. 6. And the wild asses did
stand in the high places, they studied up
the wind like dragons; their eyes did fail,
because there was no grass. 7. O Lord,
though our iniquities testify against us, do
thou it for thy name's sake: for our back-
slidings are many; we have sinned against thec.
8. O the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry
for a night! 9. Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that
cannot save? yet thou, O Lord, art in the
midst of us, and we are called by thy name;
leave us not.

The first verse is the title of the whole chapter: it does indeed all concern the dearth, but much of it
is the prophet's prayers concerning it; yet these are not unholy to say, The word of the Lord which
came to him concerning it; for every acceptable
prayer is that which God finds in our hearts; no-
thing is our word that comes to him, but what is
first his word that comes from him. In these verses, we have,
1. The language of nature lamenting the calamity.
When the heavens were as brass, and distilled
no dew, the earth was as iron, and produced no
fruits; and then the grief and confusion were uni-
versal.
2. The people of the land were all in tears. De-
stroy their vines and their fig-trees, and ye cause
all their mirth to cease, Hos. vi. 11. 12. All their
joy fails with the joy of harvest, with that of their
corn and wine, v. 2. Judah mourns, not for the
sin, but for the trouble; for the withholding of the
rain, not for the withdrawing of God's favour. The
gates thereof, all that go in and out at their gates
languish, look pale, and grow feeble, for want of
the necessary supports of life, and for fear of the
further fatal consequences of this judgment. The
gates, through which supplies of corn formerly used to
be brought into their cities, now look melancholy;
when, instead of that, the inhabitants are departing
through them to seek for bread in other countries.
Even the that sit in the gates languish; they are
black unto the ground, they go bare, as mourn-
ers, and sit on the ground; as the poor beggars at
the gates are black in the face, for want of food,
blacker than a coal, Lam. iv. 8. Famine is repre-
sented by a black horse, Rev. vi. 5. They fall to the
ground through weakness, not being able to go
along the streets. The cry of Jerusalem (that is,
of the inhabitants) is gone up; for the city is served
by the field; or, of people all parts of the land;
and the whole body of the inhabitants that have
try met at Jerusalem to pray for rain; so some. But
I fear it was rather the cry of their trouble, and the
cry of their sin, than the cry of their prayer.
2. The great men of the land felt from this judg-
ment; (v. 3.) The nobles sent their little ones to the
water, perhaps their own children, having been
sentenced to die with their servants, because they had
not withstood to keep them; and being sent to train up their children, when they were little, to
labour, especially in a case of necessity, as this was.
We find Ahab and Obadiah, the king and the lord chamberlain of his household, in their own persons,
seeking for water in such a time of distress as this was,
1 Kings xviii. 5, 6. Or, rather, their meager ones,
their servants, and small officers; these they sent
to seek for water, which there is no living with-
out; but there was none to be found, they returned

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

1. The language of grace, lamenting the iniquity,
and complaining to God of the calamity. The
people are not forward to pray, but the pro-
prietor here prays for them, and so excites them to
pray for themselves, and puts words into their
mouths, which they may make use of, in hopes to
speed, v. 7—9. In this prayer,

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

2. Mercy is earnestly begged; "Though our ini-
quities testify against us, and against the granting
of the favour which the necessity of our case calls
for, yet do thou it."

They do not say particularly
what they would have done; but, as becomes peni-
tents and beggars, they refer themselves to God;
Do with us as these things, but every thing in thee? Not,
Do thou it in this way, or at this time, but,
"Do thou it for thy name's sake; do that which will
be most for the glory of thy name." Note, Our best
pleas in prayer are those that are fetched from the
glory of God's own name; "Lord, do it, that thy
mercy may be magnified, thy promise fulfilled,
and thine interest in the world kept up; we have
nothing to plead in ourselves, but every thing in thee.
There is another petition in this prayer, and it is a
very modest one, (v. 9.) "Leave us not, withdraw
not thy favour and presence." Note, We should
dread and deprecate God's departure from us, more
than the removal of any of all our creature-comforts.

3. Their relation to God, their interest in him,
and their expectations from him grounded there-
on, are most pathetically pleaded with him,
1—9.

(1.) They look upon him as one they have reason
to think should deliver them when they are in dis-
tress, yea, though their iniquities testify against
them; for in him mercy has often rejoiced against
judgment. The prophet, like Moses of old, is will-
ing to make the best he can of the case of his people,
and therefore, though he must own that they have
sinned much as ye do sin, (Exod. xxxii. 31.) yet he pleads,
Thou art the Holy of Israel. God has en-
couraged his people to hope in him; in calling him-
sel so often the God of Israel, the Rock of Israel,
and the Holy One of Israel, he has made himself
the Holy of Israel. He has given Israel his word
to hope in, and caused them to hope in it; and
there are yet those in Israel, that do make God their
saviour in time of trouble, and they look not for salvation in
any other; "Thou hast many a time been such, in
the time of their extremity." Note, Since God is a
people's all-sufficient Saviour, they ought to hope in
him, in their greatest straits; and since he is their
only Saviour, they ought to put their whole trust in him. They
plead likewise, of the special and lasting tokens of thy presence with us,
the temple, thine ark, thine cherub's, and we are called
by thy name, the Israel of God; and then we have
reason to hope thou wilt not leave us; we are
their, save us. Thy name is called upon us, and therefore what evils we are under reflect dishonour upon thee, as if thou wast not able to relieve thine own." The prophet had often told the people, that their profession of religion would not protect them from the judgments of God; yet here he pleads it with God, as Moses, Exod. xxxii. 11. Even this may go far as to temporal punishments with a God of mercy. Valeat quantum valere possit.—Let the place assigned be fit for the child.

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

10. Thus saith the Lord unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet; therefore the Lord doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. 11. Then said the Lord unto me, Pray not for this people for their good. 12. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt-offering and an oblation, I will not accept them; but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence. 13. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place. 14. Then the Lord said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name; I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them; they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. 15. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; by sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed. 16. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem, because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to buy them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters; for I will pour their wickedness upon them.

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

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

4. That they were not duly qualified for a pardon. The prophet had owned that their backslidings were many; and though they were so, yet there was hope for them if they returned; but they show no disposition at all to return; they have wandered, and they have loved to wander; their backslidings have been their choice and their pleasure, which should have been their shame and pain, and therefore they will be their ruin. They cannot expect God should take up his rest with them, when they take such delight in going astray from him after their idols. It is not through necessity or inadvertency that they wander, but they love it.

Simers are wanderers from God; their wanderings forfeit God's favour, but it is their loving to wander, that quite cuts them off from it. They were told what their wanderings would come to, that they would wander, they would be cut off, and ruined, and all to ruin; and yet they have not taken warning, and refrained their feet. So far were they from returning to their God, that neither his prophets nor his judgments could prevail with them to give themselves the least check in a sinful pursuit. This is that for which God is now reckoning with them; when he denies them rain from heaven, he is remembering their iniquity and wasting their sins; that is it for which their fruitful land is thus turned into barrenness.

2. That they had no reason to expect that the God they had rejected should accept them; no, not though they betook themselves to fasting and prayer, and put themselves to the expense of burnt-offering and an oblation, which was designed to be an expression of faith in a Mediator; though in their prayers he be thus enforced, and offered up in those vehicles that used to be acceptable, yet, because
they do not proceed from humble, penitent, and renewed hearts, but still they love to wander, therefore I will not hear their cry, be it ever so loud; nor will I accept them, either their persons, or their performances. It had been long since declared, The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; and those only are accepted that do well, Gen. iv. 7. So they had justly forfeited the benefit of the prophet's prayers for them, because they had not regarded his preaching to them. This is the meaning of that repeated prohibition given to the prophet, (v. 11.) Pray not thou for this people for their good, as before, ch. xi. 14.—vii. 16. This did forbid him thus to express his good will to them, (Moses continued to intercede for Israel, after God had broken his heart against them, Deut. iii. 25.) but it forbade them to expect any good effect from it, as long as they turned away their ear from hearing the law. Thus was the doom of the impenitent ratified, as that of Saul's rejection was by that word to Samuel, When wilt thou cease to mourn for Saul? It therefore follows, (v. 12.) I will consume them, not only by this famine, but by the further sore judgments of sword and pestilence; for God has taken them by arrows in his quiver, and those that will not be convinced and reclaimed by one, shall be consumed by another.

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

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

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

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

3. He lays the flattered under the same doom, v. 16. The people to whom they prophesy lies, and who willingly suffer themselves to be thus imposed upon, they shall die by sword and famine. Note, The unbelief of the deceived, with all the falsehood of the deceivers, shall not make the divine threatenings of no effect; sword and famine will come upon them whatever they say to the contrary; and those will be least safe that are most secure. Impenitent sinners will not escape the damnation of hell, by saying that they can never believe there is such a thing; but will feel what they will not fear. It is threatened that this people shall not only fall by sword and famine, but lose the hope of an exemption from them. They under took to warrant people, that sword and famine should not be in the land; but it shall soon appear how little their warrants are good for, when they themselves shall be cut off by sword and famine. Note, The sorest punishments await those who promise sinners impunity in their sinful ways.

17. Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them, Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease; for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow. 18. If I go forth into the field, behold the slain with the sword! and if I enter into the city, behold them that are sick with famine! yea, both; the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not. 19. Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? we looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble!
We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against thee. 21. Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake; do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us. 22. Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? Art not thou, O Lord our God: therefore we will wait upon thee; for thou hast made all these things.

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

Here, The prophet speaks as if he already saw the miseries attending the descent which the Chaldeans made upon them; The virgin daughter of my people, that is as dear to me as a daughter to her father, is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous breach, and a breach not unto her mother, v. 15. They have, alas! yet sustained; for, (v. 18,) in the field multitudes lie dead that were slain by the sword, and in the city multitudes lie dying for want of food. Doeful spectacles! The prophets and the priests, the false prophets that flattered them with their lies, and the wicked priests that persecuted the true prophets, these are now expelled their country, and gone abroad, either as priests and captives, whithersoever their conquerors lead them, or as fugitives, and vagabonds, wherever they can find shelter and relief, in a land that they knew not. Some understand it of the true prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel, that were carried to Babylon with the rest. The prophet's eyes must run down with tears day and night, in prospect of this, that the people might come, and cry aloud, and that this and those days, whether they come, or whether they come, would be a very woful day indeed, but that he was far from desiring it, and would as gladly have brought them messages of peace as their false prophets, if he might have had warrant from heaven to do it. Note, Because God, though he inflicts death on sinners, yet delights not in it, it becomes his ministers, though in his name they proclaim the death of sinners, yet sadly to lament it.

II. He stands up in the intercession for them; for who knows but God will yet return and repent? While there is life, there is hope, and room for prayer. And though there were many among them, who neither prayed themselves, nor valued the prophet's prayers, yet there were some who were better affected, would join with him in his devotions, and set the seal of their Amen to them. 1. He humbly expostulates with God concerning the present deplorableness of their case, v. 19. It is very sad, for, (1.) Their expectations from their God were disappointed; though we are taught to call him JAH, yet the name JEHOLD Judah to be his, but now, it seems, he has utterly rejected it, and cast it off; will not own any relation to it, or concern for it. However, they thought Zion was the beloved of his soul, was his rest for ever; but now he's soul even loathes Zion, loathes even the services there performed, for the sake of the sins there committed. (2.) Then no marvel all their miseries were brought upon them; they were smitten, and their wounds were multiplied, but there was no healing for them: they looked for peace, because after a storm there usually comes a calm, and fair weather after a long fit of wet; but there was no good, things went still worse and worse. They looked for a healing time, but could not gain so much as a breathing time; Behold, trouble at the door, by which we hoped peace would enter. And is it so then? Hast thou indeed rejected Judah? Justly thou mightest. Has thy soul loathed Zion? We deserve it should. But wilt thou not at length in wrath remember mercy?

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

3. He deprecates God's displeasure, and by faith appeals to his promise; the abounding wickedness of our land, and the iniquity of our fathers, which we have imitated, and therefore justly smart for. We know, we acknowledge, that we have sinned against thee, and therefore thou art just in all that is brought upon us; but, because we confess our sins, we hope to find thee faithful and just in forgiving our sins.

4. He is constrained to impatiently speak of God's displeasure, and by faith appeals to his promise; the abounding wickedness of our land, and the iniquity of our fathers, which we have imitated, and therefore justly smart for. We know, we acknowledge, that we have sinned against thee, and therefore thou art just in all that is brought upon us; but, because we confess our sins, we hope to find thee faithful and just in forgiving our sins.

5. He is constrained to impatiently speak of God's displeasure, and by faith appeals to his promise; the abounding wickedness of our land, and the iniquity of our fathers, which we have imitated, and therefore justly smart for. We know, we acknowledge, that we have sinned against thee, and therefore thou art just in all that is brought upon us; but, because we confess our sins, we hope to find thee faithful and just in forgiving our sins.

6. He is constrained to impatiently speak of God's displeasure, and by faith appeals to his promise; the abounding wickedness of our land, and the iniquity of our fathers, which we have imitated, and therefore justly smart for. We know, we acknowledge, that we have sinned against thee, and therefore thou art just in all that is brought upon us; but, because we confess our sins, we hope to find thee faithful and just in forgiving our sins.

7. He is constrained to impatiently speak of God's displeasure, and by faith appeals to his promise; the abounding wickedness of our land, and the iniquity of our fathers, which we have imitated, and therefore justly smart for. We know, we acknowledge, that we have sinned against thee, and therefore thou art just in all that is brought upon us; but, because we confess our sins, we hope to find thee faithful and just in forgiving our sins.
to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity. 3. And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the Lord: the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy. 4. And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem. 5. For who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall go aside to ask how thou dost? 6. Thou hast forsaken me, saith the Lord, thou art gone backward; therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary of repenting. 7. And I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land: I will bereave them of children I will destroy my people, since they return not from their ways. 8. Their widows are increased to me above the sand of the seas: I have brought upon them, against the mother of the young men, a spoiler at noonday; 9. I have caused him to fall upon it suddenly, and terrors upon the city. 9. She that hath borne seven languisheth; she hath given up the ghost; her sun is gone down while it was yet day; she hath been ashamed and confounded: and the residue of them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, saith the Lord.

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

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

CHAP. XV.

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

1. THEN said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people; cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth. 2. And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then shalt thou tell them, Thus saith the Lord; Such as are for death,
shouldst have been, and of what God by this law would have led thee forward to," (v. 7.) The hot
rejoiced not from their ways, the ways of their own hearts, into the
ways of God's commandments again. There
is mercy for those who have turned aside, if they
will return; but what favour can they expect, that
persist in their apostasy?
11. What the sentence is. It is such as
denotes no less than an utter ruin.
1. God himself abandons and abhors them; My
mind cannot be toward them. How can it be
thought that the holy God should have any remaining
compassion in complyness that have such a hatred
against him? It is not in a passion, but with a
just and holy indignation, that he says, "Cast them
out of my sight, as that which is in the highest de-
gree odious and offensive; and let them go forth, for
I will be troubled with them no more."
2. He will not admit of any intercession to be
made for them; (v. 1.) "Though Moses and Sa-
muel stood before me, by prayer or sacrifice to
concile me to them, yet I could not be prevailed
with to admit them into favor." Moses and Samuel
were two as great favourites of Heaven, as ever
were the blessings of this earth, and were particu-
larly famed for the success of their mediation be-
tween God and his offending people; many a time
they stood before me, and if Moses had not stood
before him in the breach; and to Samuel's prayers
they owed their lives; (1 Sam. xii. 19.) yet even
their intercessions should not prevail, no, not though
they were now in a state of perfection, much less
Jeremiah's, who was now subject to like passions as
others. The putting of this as a case, Though they
should stand before me, supposes that they do not,
and cannot intercede with God for the saints, who
are the successors for saints on earth. It is the preroga-
tive of the Word, to be the only Mediator in the
other world, whatever Moses and Samuel and others
were in this.
3. He condemns them all to one destroying judg-
ment or other. When God casts them out of his
presence, whither shall they go forth? v. 2. Cer-
tainly no whither, to be safe or easy, but to be met
by one judgment, while they are pursued by an-
other, till they find themselves surrounded with mi-
chers on all sides, so that they cannot escape; Such
as are for death, to death. By death here is
meant the pestilence, (Rev. vi. 8.) for it is death
without visible means. Such as are for death, to
death, or for the sword, to the sword; every man
shall slay his brother, so that God has appointed:
the law that appoints the malefactor's death, deter-
nines what death he shall die. Or, He that is by
his own choice for this judgment, let him take it, or
for that, let him take it, but by the one or the other
they shall all fall, and none shall escape. It is a
choice like that which David was put to, and was
thereby put into a great strait, 2 Sam. xxiv. 14.
Consider also the way that God has appointed for
the sorest judgment of all, being both a complica-
tion and continuance of miseries. That of the
sword is again repeated, (v. 3.) and is made the
first of another four frightful set of destroyers,
which God will appoint over them, as officers over
the soldiers to do what they please with them. As
those that escape the sword shall be cut off by pes-
tilence, so those that shall be overthrown by the
sword shall be cut off by divine vengeance, which
pursues sinners on the other side death; there
shall be dogs to tear in the city, and fowls of the
air and wild beasts in the field to devour. And if
there be any that think to outrun justice, they
shall be made the most public monuments of it;
They shall be removed into all kingdoms of the
earth, (v. 4.) like Cain, who, that he might be
made a spectacle of horror to all, became a fugi-
live and a vagabond in the earth.
4. They shall fall without being reheled. Who
can do any thing to help them? When (1.) God,
when that God, whom he has before appeared
against them; I will stretch out my hand against
them, which denotes deliberate, determined stroke,
which will reach far, and wound deep, v. 6. I am
wary of repeating, it is a strange expression; they
had behaved so provokingly, especially by their
treacherous professions of repentance, that they had
put even infinite patience itself to the stretch. God
had often tried them, but when it was ready to
break forth against them he now would not grant
them no more reprieves. Miserable is the case of those
who have sinned so long against God's mercy, that
at length they have sinned it away. (2.) Their
own country expels them, and is ready to strench
them out, as it had done the Canaanites that were before
them; for so it was threatened, (Lev. xviii. 28.) I
will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land,
in their own gates, through which they shall be scat-
tered; or, into the gates of the earth, into the cities
of all the nations about the m. (3.) Their own chil-
dren, that should assist them when they speak with
the enemy in the gate, shall be cut off from them;
(v. 7.) I will bereave them of children; so that they
shall have little hopes that the next generation will
receive their overseers. (4.) We are informed how
and when the inhabitants are slain, the land
will soon be desolate. This melancholy article is en-
largened upon, v. 8, 9. where we have,
[1.] The destroyer brought upon them. When
God has bloody work to do, he will find out bloody
instruments to do it with. Nebuchadnezzar is here
called a spoiler at noon-day; not a thief in the
night that is afraid of being discovered, but one that
without fear shall break through and destroy all the
fences of rights and properties, and this in the face
of the sun, and in defiance of its light; I have
brought against the mother, a young man, a spoiler;
(see some read it:) for Nebuchadnezzar, when he
first invaded Judah, was but a young man, in the
first year of his reign. We read it, I have brought
upon them, even against the mother of the young
man, a spoiler, against Jerusalem, a mother-city,
that had a very numerous family of young men; or,
that invasion was in a particular manner terrible to
those mothers who had many sons fit for war, who
must now jeopard their lives in the high places of the
field: and, being an unequal match for the ene-
my, would be likely to fall there, to the inexpressi-
ble grief of their poor mothers, who had nursed
them up with a deal of tenderness. The same God
that brought the spoiler upon them, caused him to
fall upon it, upon the spoil delivered to him, sud-
denly and by surprise; and then terrors came upon
the city. The original is very abrupt, the city and
terror. Of the city, what a consternation will it
then be in? O the terrors that shall then seize it!
and the destructions that shall be, which is the terrors
that seemed at a distance from each other. I will
cause suddenly to fall upon her (upon Jerusalem) a
watcher and terrors; so Mr. Gataker reads it, for
the word is used for a watcher, (Dan. iv. 13, 23.;)
and the Chaldean soldiers were called watchers, ch.
iv. 16.
[2.] The destruction made by this destroyer. A
dreadful slaughter is here described. First, The
wives are deprived of their husbands; Their wives
are increased above the sand of the seas, so nume-
rous are they now grown. It was promised that the
men of Israel (for those only were numbered) should
be as the sand of the sea for multitude; but now
they shall be cut off, and their widows shall be so. But
observe, God says, They are increased to me. Tho
ugh the husbands were cut off by the sword of his
fore
tice, their poor widows were gathered in the arms of his mercy, who has taken it among the titles of his honour to be the God of the widows. Widows are said to be taken into the number, the number of these whom God has preserved in distress, and comforted them. Secondly, the parents are deprived of their children; She that has borne seven sons, whom she expected to be the support and joy of her age, now languishes, when she has seen them all cut off by the sword in one day, who had been many years her burthen and care. She that had many children is waxen feeble, 1 Sam. ii, 5. See what uncertain comforts children are; and let us therefore repent them, as though we repented not. When the children are slain, the mother gives up the ghost, for her life was bound up in theirs: Her son is gone down while it was yet day: she is bereaved of all her comforts then when she thought herself in the midst of the enjoyment of them. She is now ashamed and confounded to think how proud she had been of her sons, how fond of them, and how much she promised herself from them. Some understand by this lus-

ishing mother, Jerusalem lamenting the death of her inhabitants as passionately as ever poor mother bewailed her children. Many are cut off already, and the residue of them, who have yet escaped, and, as was hoped, were reserved to be the seed of another generation, even them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, (as the condemned malefactor is delivered to the sheriff to be executed, with the Lord, the Judge of heaven and earth, who, we are sure, herein judges right, though the judgment seem severe.

5. They shall fall without being pitied; (v. 5.) for who shall have pity on thee, O Jerusalem? When thy God has cast thee out of his sight, and his compassions fail, and are shut up from thee, neither thine enemies nor thy friends shall have any compassion on thee. They shall have no sympathy with thee, they shall not bemoan thee, or be sorry for thee, they shall have no concern for thee, shall not go a step out of their way to look how thou dost.

For, (1.) Their friends, who were expected to do these friendly offices, were all involved with them in the calamities, and had enough to do to bemoan themselves. (2.) It was plain to all their neigh-

ighbors that they had brought all this upon themselves by their obstinacy in sin, and that they might have easily prevented it by repentance and reformation, which they were often in vain called to; and therefore who can pity them? O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself. Those will perish for ever unpitied, that might have been saved upon such easy terms, and would not. (3.) God will thus complete their misery, he will set his eye upon them, as he did Job's, at a distance from them; and his hand, his righteous hand, is to be acknowledged in all the unkindnesses of our friends, as well as in all the injuries done us by our foes.

10. Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me. I. The Lord said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant, verily I will cause the enemy to entertain thee well in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction. Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel? 13. Thy substance and thy treasures will I give to the spoil without price, and that for all thy sins, even in all thy borders. 14. And I will make thee to pass with thine enemies into a land which thou knowest not; for a fire is kindled in mine anger, which shall burn upon you.

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

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

1. He met with a great deal of contradiction and opposition. He was a man of strife and contention to the whole land; (so it might be read, rather than to the whole earth, for his business lay only in that land;) both city and country quarrelled with him, and set themselves against him, and said and did all they could to thwart him. He was a peacable man, gave no provocation to any, was not apt to resent the provocations given him, and yet a man of strife, not a man striving, but a man striving with; he was for peace, but, when he spake, they were for war.

And, whatever they pretended, that which was the real cause of their quarrels with him, was, his faithfulness to God and to their souls. He showed them how to be sinners, if they would be such, and he asked them into a way to prevent that ruin, which was the greatest kindness he could do them; and yet this was it for which they were incensed against him, and looked upon him as their enemy. Even the Prince of peace hims If was thus a man of strife, a sign spoken against, continually enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself. And the gospel of peace brings division, even to friends of this kind, Matt. x. 34, 35, Luke xii. 49, 31. Now this made Jeremiah very uneasy, even to a degree of impatience; he cried out, Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me. As if it were his mother's fault, that she bore him, and he had better never have been born, than be born to such an uncomfortable life.

nay, he is angry that she had borne him a man of strife: as if he had been fatally determined to this end by his mother, the day he was born. If he had any meaning of this kind, doubtless it was very much his infirmity; we rather hope it was intended for no more than a pathetic lamentation of his own case. Note, (1.) Even these who are most quiet and peaceable, if they serve God faithfully, are often made men of strife. We can but follow peace; we have the making only of one side of the bargain, and therefore can but, as much as in us lies, live peaceably. (2.) It is very uncomfortable to those who are of a peaceable disposition, to live among those who are continually picking quarrels with them. (3.) Yet, if we cannot live so peaceably as we desire with our neighbours, we must not be so disturbed at it as thereby to lose the repose of our own minds, and put ourselves upon the fret. 7. He that is provoked without reason, and reproach. They every one of them cursed him; they branded him as a turbulent, factions man, as an incendiary, and a sover of discord and sedition. They ought to have blessed him, and to have blessed God for him; but they were arrived at such a pitch of enmity against God and his word, that for his sake they cursed his messenger, spoke contempt of him, and ill to him, did all they could to make him ridiculous; they all did so, he had scarcely one friend in Judah or Jerusalem, that would give him a good word. Note, It is often the lot of the best of men to have the worst of characters ascribed to them; So persecuted they the prophets. But one would be apt to suspect that surely Jeremiah had given them some prove
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threatening, let us not despair, but hope in God, because it may prove better than we expect. This promise was accomplished, when Nebuchadnezzar, having taken the city, charged the captain of the guard to be kind to Jeremiah, and let him have everything he had a mind to, (ch. xxxix. 11, 12.) The following words, Shall iron break the northern iron, and the steel, or brass? (v. 12.) being compared with the promise of God made to Jeremiah, (ch. i. 18.) that he would make him an iron pillar and bstone walls, seem intended for his comfort. They were continually chasting with him, and were rough and hard as iron; but Jeremiah, being armed with power and courage from on high, is an northern iron, which is naturally stronger, and as steel, which is hardend by art; and therefore they shall not prevail against him; compare this with Ezek. ii. 6—iii. 8, 9. He might the better bear their quarrelling with him, when he was sure of the victory.

2. God assures him that his enemies and persecutors should be lost in the storm, should be ruined at last, and that therein the word of God in his mouth should be accomplished, and he proved a true prophet, v. 13, 14. God here turns his speech from the prophet to the people. To them also, v. 12, may be applied; Shall iron break the northern iron, and the steel? Shall their courage and strength, and the meat hardly and vigorous of their efforts, be able to come against the strong and courageous, and the arm of the Chaldeans, which are as in- flexible, as invincible, as the northern iron, and the steel. Let them therefore hear their doom; Thy substance and thy treasure will I give to the spoil, and that without price; the spoilers shall have it gratis, it shall be to them a cheap and easy prey. Observe, The prophet was poor, he neither lent nor borrowed among his countrymen; this was not the case of God’s people, or the case of the Chaldean nation; and therefore the enemy will treat him well, Cantabit varicus exor late varior—The traveller that has no property about him, will gratulate himself, when accosted by a robber. But the people that had great estates in money and land, would be slain for what they had, or the enemy, finding they had much, would use them hardly, to make them confess more. And it is their own iniquity that herein corrects them; It is for all thy sins, even in all thy borders. All parts of the country, even those which lay most remote, had contributed to the national guilt, and all shall now be brought to account. Let not one tribe lay the blame upon another, but each take shame to itself; It is for all thy sins in all thy borders. They shall stay at home till they see their estates reduced, and then they shall be carried into captivity, to spend the sad remains of a miserable life in slavery: I will make thee to pass with thine enemies, who shall lead thee in triumph, into a land thou knowest not, and therefore cannot expect to find no comfort in it." All this is the fruit of God’s wrath: "It is a fire kindled in mine anger, which shall burn upon Jacob, and, if not extinguished in time, will burn eternally.

15. O Lord, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy long-suffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke. 16. Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts. 17. I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone, because
of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation: 18. Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail? 19. Therefore thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou takest forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them. 20. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall; and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for am with thee to save thee, and to deliver thee, saith the Lord. 21. And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.

Here, as before, we have,
1. The prophet’s humble address to God, containing a representation both of his integrity, and of the hardships he underwent notwithstanding. It is matter of comfort to us, that whatever ails us, we have a God to go to, before whom we may spread our case, and to whose omniscience we may appeal, as the prophet here, “O Lord, thou knowest; thou knowest my sincerity, which men are resolved they will not acknowledge; thou knowest my distress, which men disdain to take notice of.” Observe here,
1. What it is that the prophet prays for, v. 15.
(1) That God would consider his case, and be mindful of him; “O Lord, remember me; think upon me for good.” (2) That God would communicate strength and comfort to him; “Visit me; not only remember me, but let me know that thou rememberest me, that thou art nigh unto me.” (3.) That he would appear for him against those that did him wrong; “Revenge me of my persecutors, or, rathcr, “Vindicate me from my persecutors; give judgment against them, and let that judgment be executed so as is necessary for my vindication, and to compel them to acknowledge that they have done me wrong.” Further than this, a good man will not desire that God would revenge him, or give judgment against them; but that (whatever blasphevers say to the contrary) Jeremiah is a righteous man, and the God whom he serves is a righteous God. (4.) That he would yet spare him and continue him in the hand of the living; “Take me not away by a sudden stroke, but in thy long-suffering lengthen out my days.” The best men will own themselves so obnoxious to God’s wrath, that they are indebted to his patience for the continuance of their lives. Or, “While thou exercisest long-suffering toward my persecutors, let them prevail to take me away.” Though in compassion he complained of his birth, (v. 10.) yet he desires here that his death might not be hastened; for life is sweet to nature; the life of a useful man is so to grace. I pray not that thou shouldst take them, but that thou shouldst spare me.
2. What it is that he pleads with God for, mercy and relief against his enemies, persecutors, and slanderers.
(1.) That God’s honour was interested in his case; Know, and make it known, that for thy sake I have suffred rebuke. Those that lay themselves open to reproach by their own fault and folly, have great reason to bear it patiently, but no reason to expect that God should appear for them. But if it is for doing well that we suffer ill, and for righteousness make that we have all manner of evil said against us, we may hope that God will vindicate our honour with his own. To the same purport, (v. 16.) I am called by thy name, O Lord of hosts; it was for that reason that his enemies hated him, and therefore for that reason he promised himself that God would own him, and stand by him.
(2.) That the word of God, which he was employ’d to preach to others, he had experienced the power and proof of in his case. Here he was had the graces of the Spirit to qualify him for the divine favour, as well as his gifts. We find some rejected of God, who yet could say, Lord, we have professed in thy name. But Jeremiah could say more, (v. 16.) “Thy words were found, found by me,” (he searched the scriptures, diligently studied the word, and found that in it which was reviving to him. If yet none, we shall find)” “Thy word is truth,” the words which he was to deliver to others, were laid ready to his hand, were brought to him by inspiration; “and I did not only taste them, but eat them, received them entirely, conversed with them intimately: they were welcome to me, as food to one that is hungry: I entertained them, digested them, turned them in sacram ent sanguinem—in blood and spirit, as myself, and I have made of those truths which I was to deliver to others.”

The prophet was bid to eat the roll, Ezek. ii. 8. Rev. x. 9. I did eat it, that is, as it follows, it was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart, nothing could be more agreeable. Understand it, [1.] Of the message itself which he was to deliver. Though he was to foretell the ruin of his country, which was denied to him, and in the din of which he (not but have a deep share, yet all natural affections were swallowed up in zeal for God’s glory, and even these messages of wrath, being divine messages, were a satisfaction to him. He also rejoiced, at first, in hope that the people would take warning, and prevent the judgment. Or, [2.] Of the commission he received to deliver this message. Though the work he was called to was not attended with any secular advantages, but, on the contrary, exposed him to contempt and persecution; yet, because it put him in a way to serve God, and do good, he took pleasure in it, was glad to be so employed, and it was his meat and drink to do the will of him that sent him, John iv. 34. Or, [3.] Of the promise God gave him, that he would assist and help him; (ch. i. 8.) he was satisfied in that, and depended upon it, and therefore hoped it should not fail him.
(3.) That he had applied himself to the discharge of his office with all possible gravity, seriousness, and self-denial, though he had had of late but little satisfaction in it, v. 17. [1.] It was his comfort, that he had given up himself wholly to the business of his office, and had done nothing in his house, or in any thing that disdained himself from it, or disfigured himself for it. He kept no unsuitable company, denied himself the use even of lawful recreations, abstained from every thing that looked like levity, lest thereby he should make himself mean and less regarded. He sat alone, spent a deal of time in his closet, because of the hand of the Lord that was strong upon him to carry with easy conduct the work he was sent to do; (v. 10.) he had been filled with indignation, with such messages of wrath against this people, as we have made always pensive.” It will be a comfort to God’s ministers, when men despise them, if they have the testimonies of their conscientious for them, that they have not by any vain, foolish behaviour, made themselves despicable; that they have been dead only to the world, and alive unto God, as the prophet was, (v. 10.) but to the pleasures of it too, as here. But, [2.] It is his complaint, that he had had but little pleasure in his work. It was at first the
rejoicing of his heart, but of late it had made him melancholy; so that he had no heart to sit in the meditations of those that make merry; he cared not for company, for indeed no company cared for him; he sat alone, fretting at the people's obstinacy, and the little success of his labours among them; this filled him with a holy indignation. Note, It is the folly and infirmity of some good people, that they lose much of the pleasantness of their religion by the fretfulness and unevenness of their tempers, instead of mortifying it.

(4.) He throws himself upon God's pity and promise in a very passionate exertion; (v. 18.) "Why is my pain perpetual, and nothing done to case it? Why are the wounds which my enemies are continually giving me both to my peace and to my reputation, incurable, and nothing done to retrieve either my comfort or my credit?"

Had that which he had thought would have been thus neglected; will the God that has promised me his presence, be to me as a liar; the God on whom I depend, be to me as waters that fail?" We are willing to make the best of what we can of it, and to take it as an appeal, [1] To the mercy of God; "I know he will not let the pain of his servant be perpetual, but he will case it, will not let his wound be incurable, but he will heal it and make him prosperous." [2] To his faithfulness; "Wilt thou be to me as a liar? No, I know thou wilt not; God is not a man that he should lie. The Fountain of life will never be to his people as waters that fail."

11. God's gracious answer to this address, v. 19. — 21. Though the prophet betrayed much human infirmity in his address, yet God vouchsafed to answer him in such good words and comfortable words; for he knows our frame. Observe, 1. What God here requires of him as the condition of the further favours he designed him. Jeremiah had done and suffered much for God, yet God no Debtor to him, but he is still upon his good behaviour, God will own him. But, (1.) He must recover his temper, and be reconciled to his work, and friends with it again, and not quarrel with it any more as he had done. He must return; must shake off these distrustful, discontented thoughts and passions, and not give way to them, must regain the peaceable possession and enjoyment of himself, and resolve to be easy. Note, When we have stepped aside into any disagreeable frame or way, our care must be to return, and consider the evil we have done, and aim to be better; and then we may expect God will help us, if thus we endeavour to help ourselves.

(2.) He must resolve to be faithful in his work, for he could not expect the divine protection any longer than he did approve himself so. Though there was no cause at all to charge Jeremiah with unfaithfulness, and yet God knew his heart to be sincere; yet God saw not to give him this caution. Those that do their duty not take it ill to be told their duty. In two things he must be faithful. [1.] He must distinguish between some and others of those he preached to; Thou must take forth the precious from the vile. The righteous are the precious, be they ever so mean and poor, the wicked are the vile, be they ever so rich and great whom none, yet God saw not to give him this caution. Those that do their duty not take it ill to be told their duty. In two things he must be faithful. [2.] He must closely adhere to his instructions, and not in the least vary from them; Let them return to thee, but return not thou to them. That is, he must do the utmost he can, in his preaching, to bring people up to the mind of God; he must tell them they must, at their peril, comply with that. They that had flown off from him, that did not like the terms upon which God's favour was offered to them, "Let them return to thee, and, upon second thoughts, let them return to thee again; but do not thou return to them, do not compliment them, or comply with them, or think to make the matter easier to them than the word of God has made it." Men's hearts and lives must come up to God's law, and comply with that, for God's law will never come down to them, or comply with them.

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

(1.) God will quiet his mind, and pacify the present tumult of his spirits; If thou return, I will bring thee again; will restore thy soul, as Ps. xxiii. 3. The best and strongest saints, if at any time they have gone aside out of the right way, and are determined to return, need the grace of God to bring them again. (2.) God will employ him in his service as a prophet, whose work, even in these bad times, had comfort and honour enough in it to be its own wages; Thou shalt stand before me, to receive instructions from me, as a servant from his master; and thou shalt be as my mouth to deliver my messages to the people, as an ambassador is the mouth of the prince that sends him. Note, Faithful ministers are God's mouth to us; they are so to look upon themselves, and to speak God's mind, and as becomes the oracles of God; and we are so to look upon them, and to hear God speaking to us by them. Observe, If thou keep close to thine instructions, thou shalt be as my mouth, not otherwise; so far and no further, God will stand by ministers, as they go by the written word; Thou shalt be as my mouth, what thou savest shall be made good, as if I myself had said it. See Isa. xlv. 26. 1 Sam. iii. 19. (3.) He shall have strength and courage to face the difficulties he meets with in his work, and his spirit shall not fail again, as now it does; (v. 20.) I will make thee unto these people as a fenced house where no oppressor shall come any more to smite thee. He shall have such a body of strong and able soldiers under him; and then we may expect God will help us, if thus we endeavour to help ourselves. (4.) He shall have God for his Protector and mighty Deliverer; I am with thee, to save thee. These that have God with them, have a Saviour with them, who has wisdom and strength enough to deal with the most formidable enemy; and those that are they shall find faithful to him, to help him off from thine work, or to cut thee off from the land of the living.
In this chapter, 1. The greatness of the calamity that was coming upon the Jewish nation, is illustrated by prohibitions given to the prophet, neither to set up a house of his own, v. 4. nor to go into the house of mourning, v. 5, 7. God is justified in these severe proceedings against them, by an account of their great wickedness, v. 10, 13, 15. An intimation is given of mercy in reserve, v. 13, 14. Some hopes are given that the punishment of the sin should prove the reformation of the sinners, and that they should return to God at length in a way of duty, and so be qualified for his returns to them in a way of favour, v. 16, 21.

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

The prophet is here for a sign to the people; they would not regard what he said, let it be tried whether they will regard what he does. In general, he must conduct himself so, in every thing, as became one that expected to see his country in ruins very soon. This was but few words, but full of prediction; therefore he is to show that he is himself fully satisfied in the truth of it. Others go on in their usual course, but he, in the prospect of these sad times, is forbidden, and therefore forbears marriage, mourning for the dead, and mirth. Note, Those that would convince others of, and affect them with, the word of God, must make it appear, even in the most self-denying instances, that they do believe it themselves, and are affected with it.
there was a great loss of them; and partly, in compassion to the surviving relations, to whom the burial will be made lighter, by their having sharers with them in their grief. They used to mourn with them, and so to comfort them for the dead, as Job's friends with him, and the Jews with Martha and Mary; and it was a friendly office to give them a cup of consolation to drink, to provide essentials for them, and press this charity for the sake of them for the support of their spirits; give wine to them that are of heavy heart, for their father or mother, that it may be some comfort to them to find that, though they have lost their parents, yet they have some friends left, that have a concern for them. Thus the usage stood, and it was a laudable usage; it is a good custom, and one that is as well provided for in the law as other things, to cause songs to the house of mourning. It seems the prophet Jeremiah had been wont to abound in good offices of this kind, and it well became his character, both as a pious man and as a prophet; and one would think it should have made him better beloved among his people, than it should seem he was. But now God bids him not lament the death of his friends, as he had done, for (1.) His sorrow for the destruction of his country, in general, must swallow up his sorrow for particular deaths. His tears must now be turned into another channel; and there is occasion enough for them. (2.) He had little reason to lament those who died now just before the judgments entered, which he saw at the door; but rather to think them happy, who were seasonably taken away to be with Christ. What! should he have no thoughts of his neighbour's. All shall be mourners then, and no comforters; every one will find it enough to bear his own burden; for, (v. 5.) "I have taken away my peace from this people, put a full period to their prosperity, deprived them of health, and wealth, and quiet, and friends, and every thing whereby they might comfort themselves. When we lose peace, we lose joy, it is God's peace; it is his gift, and if he gives quietness, who then can make trouble?" But if we make not a good use of his peace, he can and will take it away; and where are we then? Job xxxiv. 29. I will take away my peace, even my loving-kindness and mercies; these shall be shut up and restrained, which are the fresh springs from which all their fresh streams flow, and then farewel all good. Note, Those have cut themselves off from all true peace, that have thrown themselves out of the favour of God. All is gone, when God takes away from us his loving-kindness and his mercies. Then it follows, (v. 6.) Both the great and the small shall die, even in this land, the land of Canaan, that used to be called the land of the living. God's favour is our life; take away that, and we die, we perish, we all perish.

3. Jeremiah must not go to the house of mourning, v. 1. It had been his custom, and it was innocent enough, when any of his friends made entertainments at their houses, and invited him to them, to go and sit with them, not merely to drink, but to eat and to drink, soberly and cheerfully. But now he must not take that liberty. (1.) Because it was unseasonable, and inconsistent with the providences of God that fell upon the land and nation. God called loud to weeping, and mourning, and fasting; he was coming forth against them in his judgments, and it was time for them to humble themselves; and it well became the prophet, who gave them the warning, to give them an example of taking the warning, and complying with it, and so to make it appear that he did himself believe it. Ministers ought to be examples of self-denial and mortification, and to show themselves affected with these terrors of the Lord, with which they desire to affect others. And it becomes all the sons of Zion to sympathize with her in her afflictions, and not to be merry with her, when she is sorrowing, Amos vi. 6. (2.) Because he must thus shew the people what sad times were coming upon them. His friends wondered that he would not meet them, as he used to do, in the house of feasting. But he lets them know, it was to intimate to them that all their feasting would be at an end shortly; (v. 9.) "I will cause to cease the voice of mirth. You shall have nothing to feast on, nothing to rejoice in, but be surrounded with calamities that shall mar your mirth, and cast a damp upon it." God can find ways to tame the most jovial. "This shall be done in this place, in Jerusalem, that used to be the joyous city, and thought her joys were all secure to her; it shall be done in your eyes, in your sight, to be a most grievous and shocking sight, so haughty, and so merry; it shall be done in your days, you yourselves shall live to see it." The voice of mirth they had made to cease by their iniquities and idolatries, and therefore justly God made to cease among them the voice of mirth and gladness. The voice of God's prophets was not heard, was not heeded, among them, and therefore no longer shall the voice of the bridegroom, and of the bride, of the songs that used to grace the nuptials, be heard among them. See ch. vii. 34.

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

Here is,

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

What is our iniquity? Or, what is our sin? What crime have we ever been guilty of, proportionable to such a sentence?" Instead of humbling and condemning themselves, they stand upon their own justification and pardon; but, did they wrong, in pronouncing this evil against them, that he laid upon them more than was right, and that they had reason to enter into judgement with God, 

Job xxxiv. 25. Note, It is amazing to see how hardly sinners are brought to justify God, and judge themselves, when they are in trouble, and to own the iniquity and the sin that have procured them the trouble they are in.

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

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

(2.) That God reckoned with them for their own iniquities; (v. 12.) You have made your fathers' sin your own, and are become obnoxious to the punishment which in their days was deferred, for you have done worse than your fathers. If they had made a good use of their fathers' reprize, and had been led by the patience of God to repentance, they should have fared the better for it, and the judgment should have been prevented, the reproof turned into comfort; but, making an ill use of it, and being hardened by it in their sins, they fared the worse for it, and the reprove being expired, an addition was made to the sentence, and it was executed with more severity. They were more impudent and obstinate in sin than their fathers, walked every one after the imagination of his heart, made that their guide and rule, and were resolved to follow that on purpose that they might not hearken to God and his prophets. They designedly suffer their own lusts and passions to be noisy, that they might drown the voice of their consciences. No wonder then that God has taken up this resolution concerning them, (v. 13.) I will cast you out of this land, this land of light, this valley of vision; since you will not hearken to me, you shall not hear me, you shall be hurried away, not into a neighboring country which you have formerly had some acquaintance and correspondence with, but into a far country, a land that ye know not, neither you nor your fathers; in which you have no interest, nor can expect to meet with any comfortable society, to be an abode to your misery. Justly were they banished into a strange land, which doted upon strange gods, which neither they nor their fathers knew. Deut. xxxiv. 10. Two things would make their case there very miserable, and both of them relate to the soul, the better part; the greatest calamities of their captivity were those which affected that, and debarred them from its bliss. [1.] It is the happiness of the soul to be employed in the service of God; but there shall you serve other gods day and night, you shall be in continual temptation to serve them, and perhaps compelled to do it by your cruel taskmasters; and when you are forced to worship idols, you will be as averse to it as ever you were land of it when it was forbidden you by your gory kings. See how God often makes men's sin their punishment, and fills the backslider in heart with his own ways. You shall have no public worship at all, but the worship of idols, and then you will think with regret how you slighted the worship of the true God. [2.] It is the happiness of the soul to have some tokens of the love and kindness of God, but you shall go to a strange land, where I will not show you favour. If they had had God's favour, that would have made even the land of their captivity a pleasant land; but, if they lie under his wrath, the yoke of their oppression will be intolerable to them.

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

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

1. God will certainly execute judgment upon them for their idolatries. Let them expect it, for the decree is gone forth of God, but you shall not escape; (v. 17.) Mine eyes are upon all their ways. They have not their eye upon God, have no regard to him, stand in no awe of him; but he has his eye upon them, neither they nor their sins are hid from
Yet this is Jehovah, a God with whom there is no contending, who gives being to threatenings, and puts life into them as well as promises.

11. Yet he has mercy in store for them, intimations of which come in for the encouragement of the prophet himself, and of these few among them that trembled at God's word. It was said, with an air of severity, (v. 13.) that God would banish them into a strange land; but that thereby they might not be cut off, nor left to perish, there follow, immediately, words of comfort:

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

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

3. Their deliverance out of captivity shall be accompanied with blessed reformation, and they
one the children of God that were scattered abroad. And this is that which so far outshines the deliverance out of Egypt, as even to eclipse the history of it, and make it even to be forgot ten. To this some apply that of the many fishes and hunters, the preachers of the gospel, who were fishes of men, to encline such with the precept not to be cut out in every mountain and hill, and secure them for Christ. Then the Gentiles came to God, some from the ends of the earth, and turned to the worship of him from the service of dumb idols.

CHAP. XVII.

In this chapter, 1. God convicts the Jews of the sin of idolatry by the notorious evidence of the fact, and condemns them to captivity for it, v. 1. 4. 2. He shows them the folly of all their carnal confidences, which should stand in no stead, when God's time was to contend with them; and that this was one of the sins upon which his controversy with them was grounded, v. 5. 11. 3. The prophet makes his appeal and address to God, upon occasions of the malice of his enemies against him, committing himself to the divine protection, and begging of God to appear for him, v. 12. 18. 4. God, by the prophet, warns the people to keep holy the sabbath-day, assuring them that, if they did, it should be the lengthening out of their tranquility; but that, if not, God would be some desolating judgment assert the honour of his sabbaths, v. 19. 27.

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

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

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

2. They cannot plead not guilty, for their sins are upon record in the book of God's omniscience, and their own conscience; nay, and they are obvious to the eye and observation of the world, v. 1. 2.

3. They are written before God in the most legible hand, in the most intelligible language, and recorded in the most legible characters, never to be forgotten, Deut. xxxii. 34. They are written there with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond; what is so written will not be worn out by time, but is, as Job speaks, graven in the rock for ever. Note, The sin of sinners is never forgotten, till it is forgiven. It is ever before God, till by repentance it can be forgiven.

4. It is graven upon the heart, and upon the horns of the altars; wherever the people look at their own consciences witness against them, and are instead of a thousand witnesses. What is graven on the heart, though it may be covered and closed up for a time, yet, being graven, it cannot be razed.
out, but will be produced in evidence, when the
books shall be opened. Nay, we need not appeal to
the tables of the heart, perhaps they will not own
the convictions of their consciences. We need go
no further, for proof of the charge, than in the
horns of altars which the blood of their idolatrous
sacrifices was sprinkled, and perhaps the
names of the idols, to whose honour they were
crated, were inscribed. Their neighbours will
witness against them, and all the creatures they
have abused by using them in the service of their
lives. To complete the evidence, their own children
shall be witnesses against them; they will tell truth,
when they shall hear the doctrine and practice of
their parents. They shall remember the altars and
the groves to which their parents took them when they were little, v. 2. It
appears that they were full of them, and acquainted
with them betimes; they talk of them so frequently,
so familiarly, and with so much delight.

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

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

(1.) They shall be made to part with their
treasures, and those shall be given into the hands
of strangers. Jerusalem is God's mountain in the
field, it was built on a hill in the midst of a plain; all
the treasures of that wealthy city will God give to the
strangers. Or, Mount Zion with the fields, thy wealth
and all thy treasures, will I expose to spoil; all the
products of the country, and the stores of the
city, shall be seized by the Chaldeans. Justly are
men stripped of that which they have served their
idols with, and have made the food and fuel of their
lives. My mountain (so the whole land was, Ps.
lvii. 34. Deut. xi. 11.) you have turned into your
high hill. Or, you have made your altars upon
their high hills, (v. 2.) and the very parts of them
shall be given for a spoil in all your borders. What we
make for a sin, God will make for a spoil; for what comfort
can we expect in that wherewith God is dishonoured?

(2.) They shall be made to part with their
inheritance, with their real estates, as well as per-
suasive tokens, which they have dedicated to their
idols; (v. 4.) Thou, even thou, or thou thyself, and
those that are in thee, all the inhabitants, shall dis-
continue from thy heritage that I gave thee. God
owns that it was their heritage, and that he gave
it them; they had an unquestionable title to it, which
was an aggravation of their folly in throwing them-
selves out of the possession of it. It is through thy-
self, (so some read it,) through thine own default,
arm we stay upon, the arm we work with, and with which we hope to work our point; the arm under which we shelter ourselves, and on which we depend for protection. God is his people's Arm, Isa. xxxiii. 2. We must not think to make any creature to be that to us, which God has undertaken to be. Man is called flesh, to show the folly of those that make them their confidence; he is flesh weak and feeble, never able to sustain much strength at all in it; he is inactive as flesh without spirit, which is a dead thing. He is mortal and dying, as flesh which soon putrefies and corrupts, and is continually wasting. Nay, he is false and sinful, and has lost his integrity; so his being flesh signifies, Gen. vi. 3. (2.) The great malignity there is in this sin, it is the departure of the evil heart of unbelief from the living God. Then that trust in man, perhaps draw nigh to God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, they call him their Hope, and say that they trust in him, but really their heart departs from him: they distrust him, despise him, and decline a correspondence with him. Cleaving to the cistern is leaving the Fountain, and is resented accordingly. (3.) The fatal consequences of this sin, it is written in God's book, that men that trust in flesh, a cheat upon himself for; (v. 6.) He shall be like the heath in the desert, a sorry shrub, the product of barren ground, sapless, useless, and worthless; his comforts shall all fail him, and his hopes be blasted; he shall wither, be dejected in himself, and trampled on by all about him. When good comes, he shall not see it, he shall not share in it, when the times mend, they shall not produce the fruits of acceptable services to God, nor reap the fruits of saving blessings from him; they dwell in a dry land. 2. Concerning the abundant satisfaction which they have, and will have, who make God their confidence, who live by faith in his providence and promise, who refer themselves to him and his guidance at all times, and repose upon his arm for an answer to their prayers, and have the hope of a better time, v. 7, 8. Observe, (1.) The duty required of us, To trust in the Lord, to do our duty to him, and then depend upon him to bear us out in doing it; when creatures and second causes either deceive or threaten us, either are false to us or fierce against us, to commit ourselves to God as all-sufficient, both to fill up the place of those who fail us, and to protect us from those who upon us is. It is to make the Lord our Hope, his favour the good we hope for, and his power the strength we hope in. (2.) The comfort that attends the doing of this duty. He that does so, shall be as a tree planted by the waters, a choice tree, about which great care has been taken to set it in the best soil, so far from being like the heath in the wilderness; like a tree that spreads out its roots, and thrusts out by the rivers, wherein it draws abundance of sap; which denotes both the establishment and the comfort which they have, who make God their Hope; they are easy, they are pleasant, and enjoy a continual security and serenity of mind; a tree thus planted, thus watered, shall not see when heat comes, shall not stand in the fear of its seasons, out of which its heart is to set itself up, it shall be sufficiently guarded against drought. Those that make God their Hope, [1.] They shall flourish in credit and comfort; like a tree that is always green, whose leaf does not wither; they shall be cheerful to themselves, and beautiful in the eyes of others. Those who thus give honour to God by giving him credit, God will put honour upon them, and make them the ornament and delight of the places where they live, as green trees are. [2.] They shall be fixed in an inward peace and satisfaction; they shall not be careful in a year of drought, nor run through their bread, nor their provision, as it is seed in itself, so it has its moisture. Those who make God their Hope, have enough in him to make up the want of all creature-comforts. We need not be solicitous about the breaking of a cistern, as long as we have the fountain. [3.] They shall be fruitful in holiness, and in all good works. Who trust in God, and by faith derive strength and grace from him, shall not cease from yielding fruits, they shall still be enabled to do that which will redound to the glory of God, the benefit of others, and their own account. 3. Concerning the sinfulness of man's heart, and the divine inspection it is always under, v. 9, 10. It is folly to trust in man, for he is not only frail, but false and deceitful. We are apt to think that we are like men, this is one thing here promised to them who do so. But this is a common mistake among the children of men to think themselves, their own hearts at least, a great deal better than they really are. The heart, the conscience of man, in his corrupt and fallen state, is deceitful above all things; it is subtle and false, it is apt to subtlety and subtility; so the word properly signifies, it is that from which Jacob had his name, a subverter. It calls evil good, and good evil; puts false colours upon things, and cries peace to those to whom peace does not belong. When men say in their hearts, suffer their hearts to whisper to them, that either there is no God, or he does not see, or he will not require, or they shall have peace, though they go on; in these, and a thousand similar suggestions, the heart is deceitful; it cheats men into a better opinion of their motions, the more deceitful are they, that are self-deceivers, self-deceivers. Hence the heart is desperately wicked; it is deadly, it is desperate. The case is bad indeed, and in a manner deplorable, and past relief, if the conscience, which should rectify the errors of the other faculties, is itself a mother of falsehood, and a ringleader in the delusion. What will become of a man, if that in him which should be the candle of the Lord, give a false light, if God's deputy in the soul, that is trusted to support his interests, betrays them? Such is the deceitfulness of the heart, that we may truly say, Who can know it? Who can describe how bad the heart is? We cannot know our own hearts, not what they will do in an hour of temptation, (Hezekiah did not, Peter did not,) not what corrupt dispositions there should be in the mind, or how the things they have turned aside; who can understand his errors? Much less can we know the hearts of others, or have any dependence upon them. But, (2.) Whatever wickedness there is in the heart, God sees it, and knows it, is perfectly acquainted with it, and apprized of it: I the Lord search the heart. This is true of all that is in the heart, all he thought of it, the fashion of it, and those thoughts most carelessly overlooked by ourselves; all the intents of it, the closest, and those that are most artfully disguised, and industriously concealed from others. Men may be imposed upon, but God can-
He not only searches the heart with a piercing eye, but tries the reins, to pass a judgment upon what he discovers, to give every thing its true character and due weight. He tries, as the gold is tried, whether it be standard or no; as the prisoner is tried, whether he be guilty or no. And this judgment which he makes of the heart, is in order to his passing judgment upon the man; it is to give to every man, according to the desert and the tendency of them; life to those that walked in the ways of life, and death to those that persisted in the paths of the destroyer; and according to the fruit of his doings, the effect and influence his doings have had upon others; or, according to what is settled by the word of God to be the fruit of men’s doings, blessings to the obedient, and damnation to the disobedient. Note, Therefore God is Judge himself, and he alone, because he, and none besides, knows the hearts of the children of men. It is true especially of all the deceitfulness and wickedness of the heart; all its corrupt devices, desires, and designs, God observes and discerns; and (which is more than any man can do) he judges of the overt act by the heart. Note, God knows more evil of us than we ourselves, and knows more good of us than we think, which is a good reason why we should not flatter ourselves, but always stand in awe of the judgment of God.

4. Concerning the curse that attends wealth unjustly gotten: fraud and violence had been reigning, crying sins in Judah and Jerusalem; now the prophet would have those who had been guilty of these sins, and were now stripped of all they had, to read the law, to observe it, or, in the language of the prophet, to eat it. He who has got treasures by vanity and a lying tongue, may hang himself in his success, and say, I am rich; nay, and I am innocent too, (Hos. xii. 8.) but he shall leave them in the midst of his days; they shall be taken from him, or he from them; God shall cut him off with some surprising stroke then, when he says, Soul, take thine ease, that hast goods laid up for many years, Luke xii. 19, 20. He shall leave them to he knows not whom, and not be able to purchase his rich heaven which he was seeking with him. It intimates what a great vexation it is to a worldly man at death, that he must leave his riches behind him; and justly may it be a terror to those who got them unjustly; for though the wealth will not follow them to another world, the guilt will, and the torment of an everlasting, Son, remember, Luke xvi. 25. Thus, at his end, he shall be a fool, a Naib, whose wealth did him no good, which be had so sordidly hoarded, when his heart became dead as a stone. He was a fool all along, sometimes perhaps his own conscience told him so, but at his end he will appear to be so. Those are fools indeed, who are fools in their latter end: and such multitudes will prove, who were cried up as wise men, that did well for themselves, Ps. xlix. 13, 18. They that get grace whose wealth did him no good, which he had so sordidly hoarded, when his heart became dead as a stone. He was a fool all along, sometimes perhaps his own conscience told him so, but at his end he will appear to be so. Those are fools indeed, who are fools in their latter end: and such multitudes will prove, who were cried up as wise men, that did well for themselves, Ps. xlix. 13, 18. They that get grace whose wealth did him no good, which be had the comfort of it in death, and the benefit of it to eternity; (Prov. xix. 20.) but they that place their happiness in the wealth of the world, and, right or wrong, will be rich, will ruffle the folly of it, when it is too late to rectify the fatal mistake. This is like the partridge that sits on eggs, and hatches them not, but they are broken (as Job xxxix. 15.) or stolen, (as Prov. xiv. 18.) or they are hatched, according some sort of foul there was, well known among the Jews, whose case this commonly was. The rich man takes a great deal of pains to get an estate together, and sits brooding upon it, but never has any comfort or satisfaction in it; his projects to enrich himself by sinful courses miscarry, and come to nothing. Let us therefore be wise in time; what we get, to get it honestly; and what we have, to use it charitably; that we may lay up in store a good foundation, and be wise for eternity.

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

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

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

2. He acknowledges the righteousness of God, in abandoning those to ruin, that forsook him, and revolted from their allegiance to him, v. 13. He
4. He complains of the infidelity and daring impiety of the people to whom he preached. It greatly troubled him, and he showed before God this trouble; as the servant that had slipt put upon him by the guests he was sent to invite, came and showed his Lord these things. He had faithfully delivered God's message to them; and what answer has he to return to him that sent him? Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of that which thou dost speak? Where is the word of the Lord now, v. 15. Is. v. 19. They bantered the prophet, and made a jest of that which he delivered with the greatest seriousness. (1.) They denied the truth of what he said; "If that be the word of the Lord, which thou speakest to us, where is it? Why is it not fulfilled?" Thus the patience of God was impudently abused, as a ground to question his infallibility. (2.) They refuted the terror of what he said; "Let God Almighty do his worst, let all he has said come to pass, we shall do well enough; the lion is not so fierce as he is painted, Amos v. 18. Lord, to what purpose is it to speak to men that will neither believe nor fear?"

5. He appeals to God concerning the faithful discharge of the office to which he was called, v. 16. They, as it were, put God and his fulness of comfort, his overflowing, overflowing fulness, like that of a fountain; it is always fresh, and clear, and clean, like spring water, while the measures of sin are puddle-waters. He is free to it, it is not a fountain sealed; they desire therefore to be condemned, as Adam, to red earth, to which by the corruption of their nature they are allied, because they have forsaken the garden of the Lord, which is so well watered. Thy that depart from God are written in the earth.

6. He prays to God for healing, saving mercy for himself. If the case of those be so miserable, that depart from God, let me always draw nigh to him, (Ps. lxxxiii. 37, 38.) and, in order to that, Lord, heal me, and save me, v. 14. Heal my backslidings, my bent to backside, and save me from being carried away by the strength of the stream, to forsake thee. He was wounded in spirit with grief upon my account; "Lord, heal me with thy comforts, and make me easy. He was continually exposed to reproach, and reproach; men made bitter use of his work, to exasperate him, and make him uneasy, and tempt him to prevaricate, and alter his message, for fear of displeasing them; but, "Lord," says he, "thou knowest I have not yielded to them." (1.) He continued constant to his work. His office, instead of being his credit and protection, exposed him to reproach, contempt, and injury; "Yet, " says he, "I have not forsaken thee after thee; I have not left my work, nor sued for a discharge, or quiesce." Prophets were pastors to the people, to fix them with the good word of God; but they were to be pastors after God, and all ministers must be so, according to his heart, (ch. iii. 15.) to follow him, and the directions and instructions he gives; such a pastor Jeremiah was; and though he met with as much difficulty and discouragement as ever any man did, yet he did not fly off as Jonah did, nor desire to be excused from going any more on God's errands. Note, Those that are employed for God, though their success answer not their expectation, must not therefore throw up their commission, but continue to follow God, though the storm be in their faces. (2.) He kept up his affection to the people. Though they were very abusive, or rather malicious, against him, he was not hardened by that malice, but spoke weightily of them, and let me not fall into their wicked hands. Heal me, sanctify me by thy graces; save me, bring me to thy glory. All that shall be saved hereafter are sanctified now; unless the disease of sin be purged out, the soul cannot live. To enforce this petition he pleads, (1.) The firm belief he had of God's power; Heal thou me, and then I shall be healed. (2.) That it was done in the name of God, and that the cure will certainly be wrought if God undertake it; it shall be a thorough cure, and not a palliative one. Those that come to God to be healed, ought to be abundantly satisfied in the all-sufficiency of his Physician; Save me, and then I shall certainly be saved, he my dangers and enemies ever so threatening. If God hold us up, we shall live; if he protect us, we shall be safe. (2.) The sincere regard the cure has to God's glory; I will never forget my praise, and for the rest of my days I desire to be healed and saved, that I may live and praise thee, Ps. cxix. 175. Thou art he whom I praise, and the praise due to thee I never gave to another. Thou art he whom I glory in, and boast of, for on thee do I depend. Thou art he that furnishes me with continual matter for praise, and I have given thee praise of thy goodness, I have praised thee, and I will praise thee. Thou shalt be my praise; (so some read it;) "heal me, and save me, and thou shalt have the glory of it. My praise shall be continually of thee," Ps. lxvi. 6.—lxix. 13.
him, and protect him, and carry him on cheerfully in that work to which God had so plainly called him, and he had so sincerely devoted himself. Two things he here desires,

(1.) That he might have comfort in serving the God that sent him; (v. 17.) Be not thou a terror to me. Surely more is implied than is expressed; Be thou a comfort to me, and let thy favour rejoice my heart, and encourage me, when my enemies all do they can to terrify me, and either to drive me from my work, or to make me drive on heavily in it." Note, The best have that in them, which might justly make God a terror to them, as he was for some time to Job, (ch. vi. 4.) to Asaph, (Ps. lxix. 23.) to Heman, (Ps. cxlix. 13.) and so it is that which good men, knowing the terrors of the Lord, dread and deprecate more than anything; nay, whatever frightful accidents may befall them, or how formidable soever their enemies may appear to them, they can do well enough, so long as God is not a terror to them. He pleads, Thou art my hope; and then nothing else is my fear, no, not in the day of evil, when it is most threatening, most pressing. My dependence is upon thee; and therefore be not a terror to me." Note, These that by faith make God their confidence, shall have for their comfort in the worst of times, if it be not their own fault: if we make him our trust, we shall not find him our terror.

(2.) That he might have courage in dealing with the destroyed city, to which he was sent; (v. 18.) They persecuted him, who should have entertained and encouraged him; Lord," says he, Let them be confounded, let them be overpowered by the convictions of the world, and made ashamed of their obstinacy, or else let the judgments threatened be at length executed upon them; but let not me be confounded, let not me be terrified by their menace, so as to betray my trust. Note, None are more ready to have work to do, which they need not be either ashamed or afraid to go on in, but they do need to be helped by the divine grace to go on in it without shame or fear. Jeremiah had not desired the sorrowful day upon his country in general; but as to his persecutors, in a just and holy indignation at their malice, he prays, Bring upon them the day of evil; in hope that the more they persecute him upon them might perhaps prevent the bringing of it upon the country; if they were taken away, the people would be better; Therefore destroy them with a double destruction, let them be utterly destroyed, root and branch; and let the prospect of that destruction be their present confusion. This the prophet prays, not at all that he might be avenged, nor so much that he might be eased, but that the Lord may be known by the judgments which he executes.

19. Thus saith the Lord unto me, Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, whereby the kings of Judah come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem; 20. And say unto them, Hear ye the word of the Lord, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates: 21. Thus saith the Lord, Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath-day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; 22. Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath-day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath-day, as I commanded your fathers. 23. But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction. 24. And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath-day, but hallow the sabbath-day, to do no work therein; 25. Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever. 26. And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt-offerings, and sacrifices, and meat-offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the Lord.

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

1. The sabbath is to be sanctified, and what is the law concerning it, v. 21, 22. (1.) They must rest from their usual employment on the sabbath-day, must do no servile work. They must bear no burden into the city, or out of it, into their houses, or out of them; husbandmen's burdens of corn must not be carried in, nor manure carried out; nor must tradesmen's burdens of wares or merchandises be imported or exported. There must not be a loaded cart, or cart, or waggon, be seen on the sabbath-day, either in the streets or in the roads; the farmers must not plow in that day, nor must the servants be suffered to fetch in provisons or fuel. It is a day of rest, and must not be made a day of labor,
unless in case of necessity. (2.) They must apply
themselves to that which is the proper work and
business of the day; "Hallow ye the sabbath, con-
sacrifice to the honour of God, and spend it in his
service and worship." It is in order to this, that
worldly business must be laid aside, that we may
be entire for, and intent upon, that work which
requires and deserves the whole man. (3.) They
must look well to the frame of their spirits, and
have a watchful eye upon every thing that borders
upon the profanation of the sabbath." Where God
is jealous, we must be cautious, "Take heed to
yourselfs, for it is at your peril, if you rob God of
that part of your time which he has reserved to
himself." Take heed to your souls; so the word is;
in order to the right sanctifying of sabbaths, we
must look well to the frame of our spirits, and
have a watchful eye upon all the motions of the inward
man. Let not the soul be burdened with the cares
of this world on sabbath-days, but let that be
employed, even all that is within us, in the work of
the day. And, (4.) He refers them to the law, the
statute in this case made and provided; "This is
no new imposition upon you, but is what I com-
manded your fathers;" it is an ancient law, it was
an old contract, may, it was a com-
mand to the patriarshs."

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

3. What blessings God had in store for them, if
they would make conscience of sabbath-sanc-
tification. Though their fathers had been guilty of
the profanation of the sabbath, they should not only
not smart for it, but their city and nation should recov-
er its ancient glory, if they would keep sabbaths
better, v. 24.-26. Let them take care to hallow
the sabbath, and do no work therein; and then,
(1.) The court shall flourish. Kings in succe-
sion, or the many branches of the royal family at
the same time, as kings and princes, shall sit upon
the thrones of the house of David, (Ps. cxxii. 5.)
shall ride in great pomp through the gates of Jerusa-
lem, some in chariots, and some on horses, attended
with a numerous retinue of the men of Judah. Note,
The honour of the government is the joy of the kingdom;
and the support of religion would contribute greatly
to this.

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

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

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

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

CHAP. XVIII.

In this chapter, we have, 1. A general declaration of God's
to do what he will with them, as easily as the potter
with the clay; ch. i. 43. They will come and do what
is just and fair with them. If he threaten their
ruin, yet, upon their repentance, he will return in mercy
to them, and when he is coming toward them in mercy,
nothing but the denial of his favours, v. 7.-10. II. A particular demonstration of the
oulity of the men of Judah and Jerusalem, in departing
from their God to idols, and so bringing ruin upon them-
selves, notwithstanding the fair warnings given them,
and God's kind intentions toward them, v. 11.-17. III.
The prophet's complaint to God of the base ingratitude
and unreasonable malice of his enemies, persecutors,
and slanderers, and his prayers against them, v. 18. .
23.

THE word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2. Arise,
and go down to the potter's house, and there
will I cause thee to hear my words. 3. Then I went down to the potter's house,
and, behold, he wrought a work on the
wheels. 4. And the vessel that he made of
clay was marred in the hand of the pot-
ner; so he made it again another vessel, as
seemed good to the potter to make it. 5.
Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying. 6. O house of Israel, cannot I do
with you as this potter? saith the Lord:
Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand
re ye in my hand, O house of Israel. 7. what instant I shall speak concerning a on, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck and to pull down, and to destroy it: 8. hat nation, against whom I have pro-
uced, turn from their evil, I will repent he evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak con-
ing a nation, and concerning a king-
1, to build, and to plant it: 10. If it do in my sight, that it obey not my voice, I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them.

The prophet is here sent to the potter's house, (he knew where to find it,) not to fire a sermon, as before to the gates of Jerusalem, but to prepare a sermon, or rather to receive it ready prepared. Those needed not to study their sermons, that had them, as he had this, by immediate inspiration. "Go to the potter's house, and observe how he manages his work, and there I will cause thee, by silent whispers, to hear my words. There thou shalt receive a message, to be delivered to the people." Note, Those that would know God's mind, must observe his appointments, and attend there where they may hear his words. The prophet was never so well prepared before, neither when he returned, and therefore went to the potter's house, (v. 3.) and notice how he wrought his work upon the wheels, just as he pleased, with a great deal of ease, and in a little time. And, (v. 4.) when a lump of clay that he designed to form into one shape, either proved too soft, or had a stone in it, or some way or other came to be marred in his hand, he presently turned it into another shape; if it will not serve for a vessel of honour, it will serve for a vessel of dishonour, just as seems good to the potter. It is probable that Jeremiah knew well enough how the potter wrought his work, and how easily he threw it into what form he pleased; but he must go, and observe it now, that, having the idea of it fresh in his mind, he might the more readily and distinctly apprehend that truth which God designed thereby to represent to him, and might with the more ready and urgent explain it to the people. God used similitudes by his servants the prophets, (Hos. xii. 10.) and it was requisite that they should themselves understand the similitudes they used. Ministers will make a good use of their converse with the business and affairs of this life, if they learn thereby to speak more plainly and familiarly to people about the things of God, and to expand scripture comparisons. For they ought to make all their know-
ledge, some way or other, serviceable to their pro-
fession. Now let us see what the message is, which Jer-
emiah receives, and is intrusted with the delivery of, at the potter's house. While he looks carefully upon the potter's work, God darts into his mind these two great truths, which he must preach to the house of Israel. 1. That God has both an incontestable sovereignty, and an irresistible ability, to form and fashion king-
doms and nations as he pleases, so as to serve his own purposes: "Cannot I do with you as this pot-
ter, saith the Lord? v. 6. Have I not as absolute a power over you in respect both of might and of right?" Nay, God has a charter title to a dominion over us than the potter has over the clay, for the potter only gives it its form, whereas we have both matter and form from God. As the clay is in the potter's hand to be moulded and shaped as he pleases, so are ye in my hand. This intimates, (1.) That God has an incontestable sovereignty over us, is not Deboh to us, may dispose of us as he thinks fit, and is not accountable to us; and that it would be as abs-
surd for us to dispute this as for the clay to quarrel with the potter. (2.) That it is a very easy thing with God to make what use he pleases of, and convert his enemies into blessings with us, and that we can-
not resist him. One turn of the wheel, quite alters the shape of the clay, makes it a vessel, makes it, new-makes it. Thus are our times in God's hand, and not in our own, and it is in vain for us to strive with him. It is spoken here of nations; the most politic, the most potent, are what God is pleased to make them, and no other: God will make what he pleases of, and convert this to the good of his people by Job, (ch. xii. 23.) He increas-
th the nations and destroyeth them, he enlargeth the nations and strieth them again; (Ps. cvii. 33, &c.) and compare Job xxxiv. All nations before God are as the drop of the bucket, soon wiped away, or the small dust of the balance, soon blown away, (Isa. xi. 15.) and therefore, no doubt, as easily managed as the clay by the potter. (3.) That God will not be a Lessor by any in his glory, at long run, but that if he be not glorified by us, he will be glorified upon them. If the potter's vessel be mar-
red for one use, it shall serve for another; those that will not be monuments of mercy, shall be mon-
uments of justice: The Lord has made all things for himself, yet even the wicked for the day of evil, Prov. xvi. 4. God formed us out of the clay, (Job xxxiii. 6.) and, we are still as clay in his hands, (Isa. xlv. 5.) and therefore, he who has pow-
er over us, that the potter has over the clay? Rom. ix. 21. And are we not bound to submit, as the clay to the potter's wisdom, and will? Isa. xxiv. 15, 16. —xlv. 9, 10.

2. That, in the exercise of this authority and ability, he always goes by fixed rules of equity and goodness. He dispenses favours indeed in a way of sovereignty, but never punishes by arbitrary power. He is his right hand, yet he rules not with a high hand, but, as it follows there, Justice and judgment are the habitus of his throne, Ps. lxxxii. 13, 14. God asserts his despotic power, and tells us what he might do, but at the same time assures us, that he will act as a righteous and merciful Judge. (1.) When God is coming against us in ways of judgment, he always gives us time to repent, and by which shall appear this, that national repentance will stop the progress of the judgments; (v. 7, 8.) If God speak concerning a nation, to pluck up its fences that secure it, and so lay it open, its fruit-
trees that adorn and enrich it, and so leave it dese-
late; to pull down its fortifications, that the enemy may have liberty to enter in, its habitations, that the inhabitants may be under a necessity of giving up, and so destroy it, as either a vineyard or a city is destroyed; in this case, if that nation take the alarm, and repent of its sins, and reform its lives, turn every one from his evil way, and return to God, God will return in mercy to them, and though he cannot change his mind, he will change his way, so that it may be said, He repenteth him of the evil that he said against them to do to them. Thus often in the time of the Judges, when the oppressed people were penitent people, still God raised them up saviours; and when they turned to God, their affairs immedi-
ately took a new turn. It was Nineveh's case, and we wish it had often been Jerusalem's; see 2 Chron. vii. 14. It is an undoubted truth, that a sin-
cere conversion from the evil of sin will be an ef-
fec tual prevention of the evil of punishment, and God can as easily raise up a penitent people from their ruins, as the potter can make anew the vessel of clay, when it was marred in his hand. (2.) When God is coming towards us in ways of mercy, if any stop be given to the progress of that
mercy, it is nothing but sin that gives it; (v. 9, 10.) If God speak concerning a nation, to build and to plant it, to advance and establish all the true interests of it, its husbandry, and his building, (1 Cor. iii. 9.) and if he speak in favour of it, it is done, it is increased, it is enriched, it is enlarged, its trade flourishes, its government is settled in good hands, and all its affairs prosper, and its enterprises succeed. But if this nation, which God hath thus loaded with benefits, do evil in his sight, and obey not his voice, if it lose its virtue, and become debauched and profane; if religion grow into contempt, and vice get to be fashionable, and so be kept in countenance and reputation, and there be a general decay of the principles and manners of the people, and they will turn his hand against them, will *pluck up* what he was planting, and *pull down* what he was building; (ch. xlv. 4.) the good work that was in the doing, shall stand still, and be let fall; and what favours were further designed, shall be withheld, and this is called his *repeating of the good wherein he said he would benefit them*, as he changed his purpose concerning Eliphaz's house, (1 Sam. xii. 30.) and hurried Israel back into the wilderness, when he had brought them within sight of Canaan. Note, Sin is the great mischief-maker between God and a people; it forfeits the benefit of his promises, and spoils the success of their prayers. It defeats his kind intentions concerning them, (Hos. vii. 1.) and baffles their pleasing expectations from him. It raises their comforts, prolongs their grievances, brings them into straits, and retards their deliverances, (Isa. xl. 1, 2.)

11. Now, therefore, go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good. 12. And they said, There is no hope; but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart. 13. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Ask ye now among the heathen, who hath heard such things? the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing. 14. Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken? 15. Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burnt incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths in a way not cast up; 16. To make their land desolate, and a perpetual hissing: every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head. 17. I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy: I will shew them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.

These verses seem to be the application of the general truths laid down in the foregoing part of the chapter, to the nation of the Jews and their present state.

1. God was now speaking concerning them, to *pluck up*, and to *pull down*, and to destroy; for it is that part of the rule of judgment that their case agrees with; (v. 11.) "Go, and tell them," (saith God,) "Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you. Providence in all its operations is plainly working toward your ruin. Look upon your conduct toward God, and you cannot but see that you deserve it; look upon his dealings with you, and you cannot but see that he designs it." He *frames evil*, as the potter frames the vessel, so as to answer the end.

II. He invites them by repentance and reformation to meet him in the way of his judgments, and so to prevent his further proceedings against them; *Return ye now every one from his evil ways*, that so you may secure his gracious disposition of you. Note, If you return from the evil he had proposed to do unto you, and that providence which seemed to have been framed like a vessel on the wheel against you, shall immediately be thrown into a new shape, and the issue shall be in favour of you." Note, The warnings of God's word, and the threatenings of his providence, should be improved by us as strong inducements to us to reform our lives; in which it is not enough to turn from our evil ways, but we must make our ways and our doings good, conformable to the rule, to the law.

III. He foresees their obstinacy, and their perverse refusal to comply with this invitation, though it tended so much to their own benefit, v. 12. They said, "There is no hope: if we must not be delivered, unless we come out of our own ways, evil ways, we may even despair of ever being delivered, for we are resolved that we will walk after our own devices. It is to no purpose for the prophets to say any more to us, to use any more arguments, or to press the matter any further; we will have our way, whatever it cost us; we will do every one the imagination of his own evil heart, and will not be under the restraint of the divine displeasure." Note, That which ruins sinners, is, affecting to live as they list; they call it liberty to live at large, whereas for a man to be a slave to his lusts, is the worst of slaveries. See how strangely some men's hearts are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, that they will not so much as promise amendment; nay, they set the judgments of God at defiance: "We will go on with our own devices, and God go on with his; and we will venture the issue."

IV. He upbraids them with the monstrous folly of their obstinacy, and their hating to be reformed. Surely never were people guilty of such an absurdity, never any that pretended to reason, acted so unreasonably; (v. 13.) Ask ye among the heathen, even those that had not the benefit of divine revelation, no oracles, no prophets, as Judah and Jerusalem had, yet, even among them, who hath heard such a thing? The Ninevites, when thus warned, turned from their evil ways. Some of the worst of men, when they are told of their faults, especially when they begin to smart for them, will at least promise reformation, and say that they will endeavour to mend. But the *virgin of Israel* bids денег, that is resolved to repent, or is resolved whatsoever conscience and Providence say to the contrary, and thus hath done a horrible thing. She should have preserved herself pure and chaste for God, who had espoused her to himself; but she has alienated herself from him, and refuses to return to him. Note, It is a horrible thing, enough to make one tremble to think of it, that those who have one thing (that you despise) laid against you, should not be desperate by refusing to reform. Willful impenitence is the grossest self-murder; and that is a horrible thing, which we should abhor the thought of. He shows their folly in two things:

1. In the nature of the sin itself that they were guilty of. They forsook God for idols, which was
In the most terrible thing that could be, for they put a cheat upon themselves, v. 14, 15. Will a thirsty traveller leave the snow, which, being melted, runs down from the mountains of Lebanon, and, passing over the rock of the field, flows in clear, clean, crystal streams? Will he leave these, pass these by, and think to mend himself with some dirty puddle-water, which, in the heat of summer, flows among and from any other place, be forsaken in the heat of summer? No; when men are parched with heat and drought, and meet with cooling, refreshing streams, they will make use of them, and not turn their backs upon them. The margin reads it, “Will a man that is travelling the road, leave my fields, which are plain and level, for a rock, which is rough and uneven” (for they are as vanns vanity itself, that are not what they pretend to be, nor can perform what is expected from them.” They had not the common wit of travellers, but even their leaders caused them to err, and they were content to be misled. (1.) They left the ancient paths, which were appointed by the divine law, which had been walked in by all the saints, which were therefore their right road, but in a dirty way, a way in which they could not but stumble; such was the way of idolatry; such is the way of all iniquity; it is a false way, it is a way full of stumbling-blocks; and yet this way they chose to walk in, and lead others in. 2. In the mischievous consequences of it. Though the thing itself had been bad, they might have had some excuse, if they had only used it as others any good out of it. But the direct tendency of it was to make their land desolate, and, consequently, themselves miserable, (for so the inhabitants must needs be, if their country be laid waste,) and both themselves and their land a perpetual hissing. Those deserve to be hissed, that have fair warning given them, and will not take it. Every one that hastes by their land shall make his remarks upon it, and shall be astonished, and wag his head, some wondering at, others commiserating, others triumphing in, the desolations of a country that had been the glory of all lands. They shall wag their heads in derision, upbraiding them with their folly in forsaking God and their duty; and so puzzling this misery upon their own heads. Note, There is a result from God will justly be the scorn of all about them; and, having reproached the Lord, will themselves be a reproach. Their land being made desolate, in pursuance of their destruction, it is threatened, (v. 17.) I will scatter them as with an east-wind, which is fierce and violent; by it they shall be hurried to and fro before the east wind; it shall not be open to escape. They shall not only flee before the enemy, (that they may do, and yet make an orderly retreat;) but they shall be scattered, some one way, and some another. That which completes their misery, is, I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity. Our calamities may be easily borne, if God look towards us, and smile upon us, when we are under them, if he can remove us, and show us favour; but if he turn the back upon us, if he show himself displeased, if he be deaf to our prayers, and refuse us his help; if he forsake us, leave us to ourselves, and stand at a distance from us, we are quite undone. If he hide his face, who then can hold him? Job xxxiv. 39. Here God would deal with them as they had dealt with him: (ch. ii. 27.) They have turned their back unto me, and not their face. It is a righteous thing with God to show himself strange to those in the day of their trouble, who have showed themselves rude and unthankful to him in their prosperity. This will have its full accomplishment in that day, when God will say to those, though they have been professors of piety, were yet workers of iniquity. {Deut. iv. 31} I know you not, nor, I never knew you. 18. Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet: come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words. 19. Give heed to me, O Lord, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me. 20. Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them. 21. Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows; and let their men be put to death; let their young men be slain by the sword in battle. 22. Let a cry be heard from their houses, when thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them; for they have digged a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet. 23. Yet, Lord, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me: forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight; but let them be overthrown before thee: deal thus with them in the time of thine anger. The prophet here, as sometimes before, brings in his own affairs, but very much for instruction to us. 1. See here what are the common methods of the persecutors. We may see this in Jeremiah's enemies, v. 18. 1. They had their heads together, to consult what they should do against him, both to be revenged on him for what he had said, and to stop his mouth for the future. They said, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah. The enemies of God's people and ministers have been often very crafty themselves, and confident with one another, to do them mischief. What they cannot act to the prejudice of religion separately, they will try to do in concert. {The wicked plots against the just.} Caiphas, and the chief priests and elders, did devise devices against our blessed Saviour himself. The question is which the gates of hell give to the kingdom of heaven, is carried on with a great deal of cursed policy. God had said, (v. 11.) I devise a device against you; and now, as if they resolved to be quits with him,
and to outwit Infinite Wisdom itself, they resolve to 
declare devices against God's prophet, not only 
against his person, but against the word he deliver-
et to them, which they thought by their subtle 
management to defeat. 'O the prodigious madness 
of those that hope to dissuad God's counsel!' 

2. Herein they pretended a mighty zeal for the 
church, which, they suggested, was in danger, if 
Jeremiah was tolerated to preach as he did; 
and, if not, let us sue them in court, for 
the law shall not perish from the priests: the 
truth is in their mouths, (Mal. ii. 6.) and there 
we will seek it; the administration of ordinances 
according to the law is in their hands, and neither 
the one nor the other shall be wrested from them. 
Counsel shall not perish from the wise; the admin-
istration of public affairs shall always be lodged with 
the privy-counsellers and ministers of state, to 
whom it belongs; nor shall the word of the 
prophets; they mean those of their own choosing, 
who prophesied to them smooth things, and 
flattered them with visions of peace. Two things 
it inspirits, (1.) That Jeremiah could not be 
himself a true prophet, but was a pretender and a 
usurper, because he was neither commissioned by 
the priests, nor conversed with the other prophets, 
who are represented as the school of speech: which 
he be suffered to go on. If Jeremiah be regarded as an 
oracle, farewell the reputation of our priests, our 
wise men and prophets; but that must be supported, 
which is reason enough why he must be suppressed. 
(2.) That the matter of his prophecies could not be 
from God, because it reflected sometimes upon the 
prophets and priests; he had charged them with be-
ing the ring-bearers of all the mischief. (ch. vi. 14.) 
and because of the people; (ch. xv. 14.) he had for 
that their heart should perish, and be aston-
bished, (ch. iv. 9.) that the wise men should be 
dismayed, (ch. viii. 9, 10.) that the priests and 
prophets should be intoxicated; (ch. xiii. 13.) now this 
galled them more than any thing else; presuming 
upon the promise of God's presence with their 
prophets and priests, they could not believe that he 
would ever leave them. 'The guides of the church 
must needs be infallible, and therefore he who for-
told their being infatuated, must be condemned as a 
false prophet. Thus, under colour of zeal for the 
church, have its best friends been run down. 

3. They agreed to do all they could to blast his 
reputation; "Come, let us smite him with the tongue, 
fasten a bad character upon him, represent him to 
some as despicable, and fit to be slighted; to them, 
as dangerous, and fit to be prosecuted; to all, as 
odious, and not fit to be tolerated." This was their 
device, fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhæret—to 
throw the vilest calumnies at him, in hope that some 
would adhere, to dress him up in bear-skins, other-
wise they could not bait him. They who projected 
this, it is likely, were men of figure, whose tongue 
was no small slander, whose representations, though 
ever so false, were not without their weight, to make 
people, to make him odious to the justice of the 
one and the fury of the other. The scourge of such 
tongues will give not only smart lashes, but deep 
wrongs; it is a great mercy therefore to be hid from 
it, Job v. 21. 

4. To set others an example, they resolve that 
they would not themselves regard any thing he said, 
they would not lay his words to heart, nor suffer 
such a solution to be heard; nor do so well 
confirmed as a message from God; Let us not 
give heed to any of his words; for, right or wrong, 
they will look upon them to be his words, and not 
the words of God. What good can be done with 
those who hear the word of God with a resolution 
not to heed it, or believe it? Nay, 

5. That they may effectually silence him, they 
resolve to be the death of him; (v. 22.) All their 
counsel against me is to slay me; they hunt for 
the precious life; and a precious life indeed it was that 
they hunted for. Long was this Jerusalem's wretched 
character. Thou that killest many of the pro-
hets, and wouldst have killed them all. 

11. See here what is the common relief of the 
persecuted. This we may see in the course that 
Jeremiah took, when he met with this hard usage. 
He immediately applied himself to his God by 
prayer, and forgot himself. 

1. He referred himself and his cause to God's 
cognizance, v. 19. They would not regard a word 
he said, would not admit his complaints, or take any 
notice of his grievances; but, Lord, (says he,) do 
they give heed to me? It is matter of comfort to 
faithful ministers, that, if men will not give heed to 
their preaching, yet God will give heed to their 
praying. He appeals to God as an impartial Judge, 
that will bear both sides, as every judge ought to 
do; 'Do not only give heed to me, but hearken to 
the voice of them that contend with me; hear what 
they have to say against me, and for themselves, 
and then make it to appear that then sitteth in the 
throne, judging right.' Hear the voice of my con-
tenders, how noisy and clamorous they are; how 
false and malicious all they say is, and let them be 
digged as deep in war and wise, as their own 
tongues to fall upon them." 

2. He complains of their base ingratitude to him; (v. 
20.) 'Shall evil be recompensed for good, and shall 
it yet go unpunished? Wilt not thou recompense 
me good for that evil?' 2 Sam. xvi. 12. 'To render 
good for good is human, evil for evil is brutish, good 
for evil is Christian, but evil for good is devillish; 
it is very absurd and wicked a thing, that we can-
not think but God will avenge it. See how great 
the evil was, that they did against him; they digged 
a pit for his soul; they aimed to take away his life, 
no less would satisfy them, and that, not in a gene-
rous way, by an open assault, against which he 
might have an opportunity of defending himself, but 
in a base, cowardly, clandestine way, they digged 
their pit for him, which there was no fence against, Ps. 
xxv. 5. But see how great the good was, which 
he had done for them; Remember that I stood 
before thee to speak good for them; he had been an 
intercessor with God for them, had used his interest 
in heaven on their behalf, which was the greatest 
kindness they could expect from one of his char-
acter. He is a prophet, and he shall pray for 
you, Gen. xx. 7. Moses often did this for Israel, 
or, at least, let me lift up my hand in prayer for 
thee, and at the same time shake the shade of 
him. He did them this kindness when they were in 
imminent danger of destruction, and most needed it. They had themselves pro-
voked God's wrath against them, and it was ready 
to break in upon them, but he stood in the gap, (as 
Moses, Ps. cvi. 23.) and turned away that wrath. 
Now, (1.) This was very base and vile; Call a 
man ungrateful, and thou canst not say that it 
was not of such a nature that they who had forgotten 
their God, did not know their best friends. (2.) It 
was very grievous to him, as the like was to David; (Ps. 
xxxv. 13.—cix. 4.) For my love they are my ad-
versaries. Thus disingenuously do sinners deal with 
the great Intercessor, crucifying him afresh, and 
speaking against him on earth, while his blood is 
speaking for them in heaven. It would be comfort to the prophet, that, when 
they were so spiteful against him, he had the testi-
mony of his conscience for him, that he had done 
his duty to them; and the same will be our rejoic-
ing in such a day of evil. The blood-thirsty hate 
the upright, but the just seek his soul, Prov. 
xxix. 10. 

3. He imprecates the judgments of God upon 
them, not from a revengeful disposition, but in a
prophetic indignation against their horrid wickedness, v. 21—23. He prays, (1.) That their families might be starved for want of bread; Deliver up their children to the famine, to the famine in the country for want of rain, and that in the city through the strictness of the siege. To this let it be added, (2.) That they might be cut off by the sword of war, which, whatever it was in the enemy's hand, would be, in God's hand, a sword of justice; Plead them out (so the word is) by the hands of the sword; let their blood be shed as profusely as water, that their wives may be left childless and widows, their husbands being taken away by death; (some think that the prophet refers to futility;) let their young men, that are the strength of this generation, and the hope of the next, be slain by the sword in battle. (3.) That the terrors and desolations of war might seize them suddenly and by surprise, that thus their punishment might answer to their sin; (v. 22.) Let a cry be heard from their houses, loud shrieks, when thou shalt bring a troop of the Chaldaeans suddenly upon them, to seize them and all they have, to make them prisoners, and their estates a prey; for thus they would have done by Jeremiah, they aimed to ruin him at once ere he was aware; They have dug a pit for me, as for a wild beast, and have hid snares for me, as for some ravenous, nocturnal foul. (Some think that they think to insinuate that all will justly be themselves insinced in an evil time.) (4.) That they might be dealt with according to the desert of this sin which was without excuse; Forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight; let them not escape the just punishment of it: let them lie under all the miseries of those whose sins are unpardoned. (5.) That God's wrath against them might be their ruin; Lord, that the Lord is before me; this denotes, that justice is in pursuit of them, that they endeavour to make their escape from it, but in vain; they shall be made to stumble in their flight, and being overthrown, they will certainly be overtaken. And then, Lord, in the time of thine anger, do to them, (he does not say what he would have done to them, but,) do to them as thou thinkest fit, as thou used to do with them whose thou art angry with; deal thus with them. Now this is not written for our imitation. Jeremiah was a prophet, and, by the impulse of the spirit of prophecy, in the foresight of the ruin certainly coming upon his persecutors, might pray such prayers as we may not; and if we think, by this example, to justify ourselves in such impreca- tions, we know not what manner of spirit we are of; our Master has taught us, by his precept and pattern, to bless them that curse us, and pray for them that despitefully use us; yet it is written for our instruction, and is of use to teach us, [1.] That those who have forfeited the benefit of the prayers of God's prophets for them, may justly expect to have their prayers against them. [2.] That perse- cutors of the saints are men that pass by this iniquity very fast, and will bring as sure and sore a destruction upon them as any other. [3.] Those who will not be won upon by the kindness of God and his prophets, will certainly at length feel the just resentment of both. 

CHAP. XIX. The same melancholy theme is the subject of this chapter; that was of the foregoings—the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem for their sins; Jeremiah had often foretold this; here he has particular full orders to do it again. 1. He must set their sins in order before them, as he had often done, especially their idolatry, v. 4. 5. He must describe the particular judgments which were now coming upon them for these sins, v. 6. 9. 11. He must do this in the valley of Tophet, with great solemnity, and for some particular reasons, v. 2, 3. 4. He must summon a company of the elders together, to be witnesses of these things, v. 11. He must confirm this, and endeavor to affect his hearers with it, by a sign, which was, the breaking of an earthen bottle, signifying that they should be dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel, v. 10. 13. When he had done this in the valley of Tophet, he ratified it in the court of the temple, v. 14. Thus were all likely means tried to awaken this stupid, senseless people to repentance, that their ruin might be prevented; but all in vain. 

1. Thus saith the Lord, Go, and get a potter's earthen bottle, and take of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests, 2. And go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the east gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee; 3. And say, Hear ye the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle. 4. Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burnt incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents; 5. They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt-offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind: 6. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor, The valley of the son of Hinnom, but, The valley of slaughter. 7. And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives; and their carcases will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. 8. And I will make this city desolate, and a hissing: every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss, because of all the plagues thereof. 9. And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons, and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend, in the siege and strictness wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.

The corruption of man having made it necessary that freecraft should be upon freecraft, and line upon line, (so upon are we to receive, and so very apt to let slip, the things of God,) the grace of God has provided that there shall be, accordingly, freecraft upon freecraft, and line upon line, that those who are irrevocable may be inexusable. For this reason, the prophet here is sent with a message to the same purport with what he had often delivered, but with some circumstances that might make it the more taken notice of, a thing which ministers
should study, for a little circumstance may sometimes be a great advantage, and they that would win souls, must be wise.

1. He may take of the elders and chief men, both in church and state, to be his auditors, and witnesses to what he said; *the ancients of the people, and the ancients of the priests, the most eminent men both in the magistracy, and in the ministry, that they might be *faithful witnesses, to record, as these, 1st. vii. 2. It is strange that these great men would be at the back of a poor prophet, and obey his summons. They send him out of the city, they ban him counsel either, and they knew what he would say. But, though the generality of the elders were disaffected to him, yet it is likely that there were some few among them, who looked upon him as a prophet of the Lord, and would pay this respect to the heavenly vision. Note, Persons of rank and figure have an opportunity of honouring God by a diligent attendance on the ministry of the word, and other divine institutions; and they ought to think it an honour, and no dispensation to themselves, yea, though the circumstances be mean and desppicable. It is certain that the greatest of men is less than the least of the ordinances of God.

2. He must go to the valley of the son of Hinnom, and deliver this message there; for the word of the Lord is not bound to any one place; as good a place as any other were to have been chosen. The valley of Hinnom was the south side of Jerusalem, and as in the gate of the temple. Christ preached on a mountain, and out of a ship. This valley lay partly on the south side of Jerusalem, but the prophet's way to it was by the entrance of the east gate, the sun-gate, (v. 2.) so some render it, and suppose it to look not toward the sun-rising, but the noon-sun, the hotter's gate; so some. This sermon must be preached in that place, in the valley of the son of Hinnom. Isa. xi. 12. Note, that seen they had been guilty of the villest of their idolatries, the sacrificing of their children to Moloch, a horrid piece of impiety, which the sight of the place might serve to remind them of, and upbraid them with. (2.) Because there they should feel the sorest of their calamities; there the greatest slaughter should be made among them; and it being the common sink of the city, let them see what a miserable spectacle this magnificent city would be, when it should be all like the valley of Tophet. God bids him go thither, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee, when thou comest thither; whereby it appears, (as Mr. Gataker well observes,) that God's messages were frequently not revealed to the prophets before the very instant of time wherein they were to deliver them. He must give general notice of a general ruin now shortly coming upon Judah and Jerusalem, v. 3.

3. He must, as those that make proclamations, begin with an "Oyes, Hear ye the word of the Lord, though it be a terrible word, for you may think yourselves if it be so." Both rulers and riled must attend to it, at their peril; the kings of Judah, the king and his sons, the king and his princes, and priests, who are the ministers of kingdom; the king of kings, for, high as they are, he is above them. The inhabitants of Jerusalem also must hear what God has to say to them. Both princes and people have contributed to the national guilt, and must concurre in the national repentance, or they will both share in the national ruin. Let them all know that the Lord of hosts, who is therefore able to do so well may be preached in the least places of the earth, (as he is,) and the least place must be heard, because he is so, will therefore punish them in the first place for their iniquities; (Amos iii. 2.) He will visit evil upon this place, upon Judah and Jerusalem, so surprising, and so dreadful, that whoever hears it, his ears shall tingle: whichever hears the prediction of it, hears the report and representation of it, it shall make such an impression of terror upon him, that he shall still think he hears it sounding in his ears, and shall not be able to get it out of his mind. The ruin of Esh's house is thus described, (1 Sam. ii. 11.) and of Jerusalem, 2 Kings xxi. 12.

4. He must plainly tell them what their sins were, for which God had this controversy with them; (v. 4, 5.) they were, apostacy from God; They have forsaken me; abuse of the privileges of the visible church, with which they had been dignified; They have transgressed this place. Jerusalem, the holy city, the temple, the holy house, which were designed for the honour of God, and the support of his kingdom among men, they had alienated from these purposes and (as some render the word) they had strangely abused. They had so polluted both with their wickedness, that God had disowned both, and abandoned them to ruin. He charges them with an affront for, and the adoration of, false gods, such as neither they nor their fathers have known, such as never had recommended themselves to their belief and esteeem by any acts of power or goodness done for them or their ancestors, as that God had abundantly done, whom they forsook; yet they took them at a venture for their gods; nay, being fond of change and novelty, they liked them the better for their being upstarts; and new fashions in religion are always the worst things. They also stand charged with murder, wilful murder, from malice prepense; They have filled this place with the blood of innocents. It was Manasseh's sin, (2 Kings, xxiv. 4.) which the Lord would not pardon. Nay, as if idolatry and murder, committed separately, were not bad enough, and affront enough to God and man, they have put them together, having consolidated them into such an odious crime, that of burning their children in the fire to Baal, (v. 5.) which was the most insolent defiance to all the laws both of natural and revealed religion that ever mankind was guilty of; and by it they openly declared that they loved their new gods better than ever they loved the true God, though they were such cruel taskmasters, that they required human sacrifices, inhuman slaves, they sold both all lives and souls are, never demanded from his worshippers; he never shake of such a thing, nor came it into his mind. See ch. vii. 31.

5. He must endeavour to affect them with the greatness of the desolation that was coming upon them. He must tell them, (as he had done before, ch. vii. 52.) that this valley of the son of Hinnom shall acquire a new name, the valley of slaughter, (v. 6.) for (v. 7.) multitudes shall fall there by the sword, when either they sally out upon the besiegers, and are repulsed, or attempt to make their escape, and are seized; They shall fall before their enemies, who not only endeavour to make themselves masters of their houses and estates, but have such an implacable enmity to them, that they seek their lives, and are thirsty after their blood. They shall not hear the voice of the parrot, but the most, dead, will not allow a cartel for the burying of the slain, but their carcases shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven and beasts of the earth. What a dismal place will the valley of Tophet be then? And as for those that remain within the city, and will not capitulate with the besiegers, they shall perish for want of food, when first they have eaten the flesh of the chosen men, and daughters of the besiegers, through the straitness wherewith their enemies shall straiten them, v. 9. This was threatened in the law, as an instance of the extremity to which the judgments of God should reduce them, (Lev. xxvi. 29. Deut. xxxii. 53.) and was accomplished, Lam. iv. 10. And lastly, the whole city shall be desolate, the houses laid in ashes, the inhabitants...
sacrifices in the temple, or taken prisoners; there shall be no resort to it, nor any thing in it but what looks ruinful and horrid; so that every one that passeth by shall be astonished, (v. 8.) as he had said before, ch. xviii. 16. That place which holiness had made the joy of the whole earth, sin had made the reproach and shame of the whole earth.

He had moreover told them that all their attempts to prevent and avoid this ruin, so long as they continued impenitent and unformed, would be fruitless and vain; (v. 7.) I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem, of the princes and senators of Judah and Jerusalem, in this place, in the royal palace, which lay on the south side of the city, not far from the place where the prophets made their oracle. Note, There is no fleeing from God's justice, but by fleeing to his mercy. They that will not make good God's counsel, by humbling themselves under his mighty hand, God will make void their counsel, and blast their projects, which they think ever so well concerted for their own preservation. There is no counsel or strength against the Lord.

10. Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee, 11. And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Even so will I break this people, and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again; and they shall bury them in Tophet, till there be no place else to bury. 12. Thus will I do unto this place, saith the Lord, and to the inhabitants thereof, and even make their city as Tophet: 13. And the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, shall he defile, as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burnt incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink-offerings unto other gods. 14. Then came Jeremiah from Tophet, whither the Lord had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the Lord's house, and said to all the people, 15. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will bring upon this city, and upon all her towns, all the evil that I have pronounced against it; because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words.

The message of wrath delivered in the foregoing verses is here enforced, that it might gain credit, two ways.

I. By a visible sign. The prophet was to take along with him an earthen bottle, (v. 1.) and when he had delivered his message, he was to break the bottle to pieces, (v. 10.) and the same that were auditors of the sermon, must be spectators of the sign. He had compared this people, in the chapter before, to the potter's clay, which is easily marred in the making; but some might say, "It is past that with us, we have been made and hardened long since." And what though you be," says he, "the potter's vessel is as soon broken in the hand of any man, as the vessel while it is soft clay is marred in the potter's hand, and its case is, in this respect much worse; that the vessel, while it is soft clay, though it be marred, may be moulded again, but after it is hardened, when it is broken, it can never be pieced again." Perhaps what they see will affect them more than what they only hear talk of; that is the intention of sacramental signs, and teaching by symbols was anciently used. In the explanation of this sign, he must incutate what he had before said, with a further reference to the place where this was done, in the valley of Tophet.

1. As the bottle was easily, irresistibly, and irrecoverably broken, so shallJerusalem be broken by the Chaldean army, v. 11. They depended much upon the firmness of their constitution, and the fixness of their courage, which they thought hardened them like a vessel of brass; but the prophet shows that all that did but harden them like a vessel of earth, which, though hard, is brittle, and sooner broken than that which is not so. They were as a broken pot, when they were vessels of earth, and so they shall be made to know, if they dishonour God and themselves, and serve not the purposes for which they were made. It is God himself who made them that resolves to unmake them; I will break this people, and this city, dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel; the doom of the heathen, (Ps. ii. 9. Rev. ii. 27.) but now Jerusalem's doom, xxx. 14. A potter's vessel, when once broken, cannot be made whole again; cannot be cured, so the word is. The ruin of Jerusalem shall be an utter ruin; no hand can repair it, but his that broke it; and if they return to him, though he has torn, he will heal.

2. This was done in Tophet to signify two things, (1.) That Tophet should be the receptacle of the slain; The place of returning from thence to bury elsewhere; (so some read it) and if they had had conveniences any where else, they would not have buried there, where all the fifth of the city was carried. Or, as we read it, They shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place to bury any more there; they shall justly for room to lay their dead; and a very little room will then serve these, who, while they lived, laid huge to house, and cast them to field. They that would be placed alone in the midst of the earth, while they were above ground, and obliged all about them to keep their distance, must lie with the multitude when they are under ground, for they are innumerable before them.

(2.) That Tophet should be a resemblance of the whole city; (v. 12.) I will make this city as Tophet. A they say of Tophet, which is the valley which the Lord will shew the kings which they sacrificed to their idols, so God will fill the whole city with the slain, that shall fall as sacrifices to the justice of God. We read (2 Kings xxviii. 10.) of Josiah's defiling Tophet, because it had been abused to idolatry; which he did, (as should seem, v. 14.) by filling it with the bones of men; and, whatever it was before, thenceforward it was loaded upon as a detestable place. Dead carcasses, and other filth of the city, were carried thither, and a fire continually kept there, for the burning of it. This was the posture of that valley, when Jeremiah was sent thither to prophesy; and so execrable a place was it looked upon to be, that, in the language of our Saviour's time, hell was called in, in allusion to it, Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom. It was," (says God,) "since that blessed reformation, when Tophet was defiled, did not proceed as it ought to have done, nor prove a thorough reformation, but though the idols in Tophet were abolished and made odious, these in Jerusalem remained, there fore will I do with the city as Josiah did by Tophet. fill it with the bodies of men, and make it an heap of rubbish." Even the houses of Jerusalem, and those of the kings of Judah, the royal palaces not excepted, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, (v. 15.) and for the same reason, because of the idolatries that have been committed there; since they will not defile them by a reformation, God will defile them by a destruction, because upon the roof
of their houses they have burnt incense unto the host of heaven. The flat roofs of their houses were sometimes used by devout people as convenient places for prayer, (Acts x. 6.) and by idolaters they were used as high places, on which they sacrificed to strange gods, especially to the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, that there they might be so much the more have a full and fuller view of them. We read of those that worshipped the host of heaven on the house-tops, (Zeph. i. 5.) and of altars on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, 2 Kings xxiii. 12. This sin upon the house-tops brought a curse into the house, which consumed it, and made it a dunghill like Tophet.

II. By a solemn recognition and justification of what they had heard in the court of the Lord's house, v. 14, 15. The prophet returned from Tophet to the temple, which stood upon the hill over that valley, and there confirmed, and, probably, repeated, what he had said in the valley of Tophet, for the benefit of those who had not heard it: what he had said he would stand to. Here, as often before, he both assures them of judgments coming upon them, and assigns the cause of them, which was their sin. Both these are bound up together in the same sentence, with a reference to all that had gone before. 1. The accomplishment of the prophecies is here the judgment threatened. The people flattered themselves with a conceit that God would be better than his word; the threatening was but to frighten them, and keep them in awe a little; but the prophet tells them that they deceive themselves if they think so: for thus saith the Lord of hosts, who is almighty, he will make his words good, I will bring upon this city, and upon all her towns, all the lesser cities that belong to Jerusalem the metropolis, all the evil that I have pronounced against it. Note, Whatever men may think to the contrary, the executions of Providence will fully answer the predictions of the word; and God will appear as terrible against sin and sinners as the scripture makes him, nor shall the unbelievers make either his promise or his threatenings of no effect, or of less effect than he was thought to be of. 2. The contempt of the prophecies is here the sin charged upon them, as the procuring cause of this judgment. It is because they have hardened their necks, and would not bow and bend them to the yoke of God's commands, would not hear my words, would not heed them, and yield over to their sins. Their necks of sinners in their ways, is altogether their own fault; if their necks are hardened, it is their own act and deed, they have hardened them; if they are deaf to the word of God, it is because they have stopped their own ears. We have need therefore to pray that God, by his grace, would deliver us from hardness of heart, and contempt of his word and commandments.

CHAP. XX.

Such plain dealing as Jeremiah used in the foregoing chapters, if it did not convince and humiliate men, would provoke and exasperate them; and so it did: for here we find, I. Jeremiah persecuted by Pashur, for preaching that sermon, v. 1, 2. II. Pashur threatened for so doing, and the word, which Jeremiah had preached, confirmed, v. 3-6. III. Jeremiah complaining to God concerning it and the other instances of hard measure that he had since he began to be a prophet, and when he had laboured with them in numbers, (v. 7-10.) encouraging himself in God, lodging his appeal with him, not doubting but that he shall yet praise him, by which it appears that he had much grace, (v. 11, 13.) and the prophet had seen of the time of his day of his oath, (v. 14, 15.) by which it appears that he had had sad reminders of corruption in him too, and was a man subject to like passions as we are.

1. NOW Pashur, the son of Immer the priest, who was also the chief governor in the house of the Lord, heard the Lord speak these things. 2. Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord. 3. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The Lord hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib. 4. For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends; and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword. 5. Moreover, I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of the king's enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon. 6. And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thy house, shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.

Here is, I. Pashur's unjust displeasure against Jeremiah, and the fruits of that displeasure, v. 1, 2. This Pashur was a priest, and therefore, one would think, should have protected Jeremiah, who was of his own order, a priest too; and the more, because he was a prophet of the Lord, whose interests the priests, his ministers, ought to consult: but this priest was a persecutor of him whom he should have patronized. He was the son of Immer; he was of the sixteenth course of the priests, of which order Immer was head, whom Jeremiah was first settled by, David was father, (1 Chron. xxiv. 14.) as Zechariah was of the order of Abia, Luke i. 5. Thus this Pashur is distinguished from another of the same name, mentioned ch. xxii. 1, who was of the fifth course. This Pashur was chief governor in the temple; perhaps he was only so pro tempore—for a short period, the course he was head of being now in waiting; or he was suffragan to the High Priest; or, perhaps, captain of the temple, or of the guards about it, Acts iv. 1. This was Jeremiah's great enemy. The greatest malignity to God's prophets was found among those that professed sanctity, and concern for God and the church.

We cannot suppose that Pashur was one of those ancient of the priests that went with Jeremiah to the valley of Tophet, to hear him prophesy, unless he were with them, for the design was to make them angry against him; but when he came into the courts of the Lord's house, it is probable that he was himself a witness of what he said, and so it may be read, (v. 1.) He heard Jeremiah prophesying these things. As we read it, the information was brought him by others, whose examinations he took; He heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things, and could not bear it; especially that he should dare to preach in the courts of the Lord's house, where he was chief governor, without his leave. When power in the
church is abused, it is the most dangerous power that can be employed against it. Being incensed at Jeremiah, 1. He smote him, struck him with his hand, or staff of authority. Perhaps it was a blow intended only to disgrace him, like that which the High Priest ordered to be given Paul; (Acts xxiii. 2.) he struck him on the mouth, and bade him hold his tongue. We are told this was a blow intended to hurt him; he beat him severely, as a malefactor. It is charged upon the husbandmen, (Matt. xxi. 35.) that they beat the servants. The method of proceeding here was illegal; the High Priest, and the rest of the priests, ought to have been consulted, Jeremiah's credentials examined, and the matter inquired into, whether he had an authorized commission or no. The modes of treating men are set aside, and despised, as mere formalities; right or wrong, Jeremiah must be run down. The enemies of piety would never suffer themselves to be bound by the laws of equity.

2. He put him in the stocks. Some make it only a place of confinement; he imprisoned him. It rather seems to be an instrument of closer restraint, and intended to put him both to pain and shame. Some think it was a pillory for his neck and arms; others (as we) a pair of stocks for his legs; whatever engine it was, he continued in it all night, and in a public place too, in the high gate of Benjamin, which was in, or by the house of the Lord; probably, a gate through which they passed between the city and the temple. Pashur intended thus to chastise him, that he might lose all confidence and regard, and expose him to contempt, and render him odious, till he might not be regarded if he did prophecy. Thus have the best men met with the worst treatment from this ungracious, ungrateful world; and the greatest blessings of their age have been accounted as the off-scouring of all things. Would it not raise a pious indignation, to see such a man as Pashur upon the bench, and such a man as Jeremiah in the stocks? It is well that there is another life after this, when persons and things will appear with another face.

II. God's just displeasure against Pashur, and the tokens of it. On the morrow, Pashur gave Jeremiah his discharge, brought him out of the stocks; (v. 3.) it is probable that he continued him there, in little case, as long as he thought it expedient to keep him. He put him to the worst punishment. And now Jeremiah has a message from God to him. We do not find that, when Pashur put Jeremiah in the stocks, the latter gave him any check for what he did; he appears to have quietly and silently submitted to the abuse; when he suffered, he threatened not; but, when he brought him out of the stocks, then God put a word into the prophet's mouth, which would awaken his conscience, if he had any. For when the prophet of the Lord was bound, the word of the Lord was not,—What can we think Pashur aimed at, in smiting and abusing Jeremiah? Whatever it is, we shall see by what God says to him, that he is disappointed.

1. Did he aim to establish himself, and make himself easy, by silencing one that told of his faults, and would be likely to lessen his reputation with the people? He shall not gain this point; for, (1.) Though the prophet should be silent, his own conscience shall fly in his face, and make him always uneasy. To confirm this, he shall have a name given him, Magor-missabib—Terror round about, or, Fear on every side. God himself shall give him this name, whose calling him so, will make him so. It seems to be a proverbial expression, bespeaking a man not only in distress, but in despair; not only in danger on every side, (that a man may be, and yet by faith may be in no terror, as David, Ps. iii. 6. xvii. 3.) but in fear on every side; and that a man may be when there appears no danger; The wicked flame when no man pursues; are in great fear where no fear is. This shall be Pashur's case; (v. 4.) Be- hold, I will make thee a terror to thyself; thou shall be subject to continual frights, and thy own ha1cy and imagination shall create thee a constant un-11iness. Note, God can make the most differing nuer- torr to themselves and all about them; which is a good reason why we should be very thankful, so long as God continues to us the use of our reason and the peace of our consciences. (2.) His friends, whom he put a confidence in, and perhaps, studied to oblige, in what he did against Jeremiah, shall all fall him. God does not presently strike him dead for what he did against Jeremiah, but lets him live a while longer, to the will of others; but, in a mome time, will commit him to a continual carseination, that, wherever he goes, he shall be a monument of divine justice; and when it is asked, "What makes this man in such continual terror?" it shall be answered, "It is God's hand upon him for putting Jeremiah in the stocks." His friends, who should encourage him, shall all be cut off; they shall fall by the sword of the enemy, and their eyes shall behold it, which doth much to increase his terror. (3.) He shall find, in the issue, that his terror is not causeless, but that divine venge- nace is waiting for him; (v. 6.) he and his family shall go into captivity, even to Babylon; he shall neither die before the evil comes, as Josiah, nor live to survive it, as some did, but he shall die a captive, and shall in effect, be buried in his chains, he and his family, his friends, and his father's house. Let persecutors read it, and tremble; trembling repentance before they be made to tremble to their ruin.

2. Did he aim to keep the people easy, to prevent the destruction that Jeremiah prophesied of, and by sinking his reputation to make his words fall to the ground? It is probable that he did; for it appears by v. 6. that he did himself set up for a prophet, and told the people that they should have peace; he prophesied lies to them, and because Jeremiah's prophecy contradicted his, and tended to awaken those whom he endeavoured to rock asleep in their sins, therefore he set himself against him. But could he gain his point? No, Jeremiah stands to what he has said against Judah and Jerusalem; and God by his mouth barks it. Men get nothing by silencing those who reprove and warn them; for the word will have its course; so it had here.

(1.) The country shall be ruined; (v. 4.) I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon. It had long been God's own land, but he will now transfer his title to it to Nebuchadnezzar, he shall be master of the country, and dispose of the in- habitants; some to the sword, and some to captivity, as he pleases, but none shall escape him.

(2.) The city shall be ruined too, v. 5. The king of Babylon shall spoil that, and carry all that is val- able in it to Babylon. [1.] He shall seize their magazines and military stores, "as the beloved"
JEREMIAH, XX.

1. Here is a sad representation of the wrong that was done him, and the affronts that were put upon him; and this representation, no doubt, was according to truth, and deserves no blame, but was very justly and very fitly made to him that sent him, and no doubt, would bear him out. He complains,

1. That he was ridiculed and laughed at; they made a jest of every thing he said and did; and this cannot but be a great grievance to an ingenuous mind; (v. 1.) I am mocked of my enemies, and cast down upon me, and made myself merry with, as if he had been a fool, good for nothing but to make sport. Thus he was continually;

2. I was in derision daily; thus he was universally; Every one mocketh me; the greatest so far forget their own gravity, and the meanest so far forget mine. Thus our Lord Jesus, on the cross, was reviled both by those that bore him, and by the reviling of each had their peculiar aggravation. And what was it that thus exposed him to contempt and scorn? It was nothing but his faithful and zealous discharge of his office; (v. 8.) they could find nothing for which to deride him, but his preaching; it was the word of the Lord that was made a reproach to him; for which they should have honoured and respected him, as they were taught to deliver their jests to the Lord to them, was the very thing for which they reproached and reviled him. He never preached a sermon, but, though he kept as closely as possible to his instructions, they found something or other in it, for which to banter and abuse him. Note, It is sad to think that, though divine revelation be one of the greatest blessings and honours that ever was bestowed upon the world, yet it has been turned very much to the reproach of the most zealous preachers and believers of it. Two things they derided him for, (1.) The manner of his preaching: Since he spake, he cried out. He had always been a lively, affectionate preacher, and since he began to speak in God's name, he always spake as a man in earnest; he cried aloud, and did not spare,-spared neither himself, nor them to whom he preached; and this was enough for them to laugh at, who hated to be serious. It is common for these that are unaffected with, and disaffected to, the things of God themselves, to ridicule those that are much affected with them. Lively preachers are the scorn of careless, unbelieving hearers. (2.) The matter of his preaching; he cried violence and spoil. He reproved them for the violence and spoil which they were in the habit of, to us, one another; and he reproved the violence and spoil which should be brought upon them, as the punishment of that sin; for the former they ridiculed him as overprecise, for the latter as over-credulous; in both he was provoking to them, and therefore they resolved to run him down. This was bad enough, yet he complains further; (2.) That he was pitted and contrived; he was not only ridiculed as a weak man, but reproached and misrepresented as a bad man, and dangerous to the government. This he laments as his grievance, v. 10. Being laughed at, though it touches a man in point of honour, is yet a thing that may be easily laughed at again; for, as it has been well observed, it is no shame to be laughed at, but to despise him, as they were those that acted the sportful part, and with more subtility. (1.) They spake ill of him behind his back, when he had no opportunity of clearing himself, and were industrious to spread false report concerning him; I heard, at second-hand, the defaming of many, fear on every side, (of many Magor missabibis; so some read it,) of many such men as Pashur was, and who may express this of him. On this was the matter of their defamation, they represented Jeremiah as an instigator of the minds of
the people, and so made them uneasy under the government, and disposed them to a rebellion. Or, how the prophets were violently against him, that he could not but be afraid of the event. When he was, he had reason to fear informers; so that they made him almost a Major-missibus. These words are found in the original, verbatim, the same, Ps. xxxi. 13. I have heard the slander, or dashing of many, fear on every side. Jeremiah, in his complaint, chooses to make use of the same words that David had for David's purposes, as a comfort to him to think that other good men had suffered the abuses before him, and to teach us to make use of David's psalms with application to ourselves, as there is occasion. Whatever we have to say, we may from thence take with us words. See how Jeremiah's enemies contrived the matter; Report, say they, and we will report. They resolve to cast an odium upon him, and this is the method they take; "Let some very bad thing be said of him, which may render him obnoxious to the government, and though it be ever so false, we will second it, and spread it, and add to it." (For the reproaches of good men lose nothing by the carriage.) "Do you that frame a story plausible, or you that can pretend to some acquaintance with him, report it once, and it will be sufficient to us, for when you come into it, we do say it, and we will swear it; do you set it among, and we will follow it." And thus both are equally guilty, they that raise, and they that propagate, the false report. The receiver is as bad as the thief. (2.) They flattered him to his face, that they might get something from him, on which to ground an accusation, as the spies that came to Balaam, seeking themselves to be just men, Luke xx. 20.—xi. 33, 34. His familiar, that he conversed freely with, and put a confidence in, watched for his halting, observed what he said, which they could by any strained innuendo put a bad construction upon, and carried it to his enemies. His case was very sad, when those betrayed him whom he took to be his friends. They said among themselves, "If we accuseth him kindly, and insinuate ourselves into his acquaintance, peradventure he will entice to own that he is in confederacy with the enemy, and a pensioner to the king of Babylon, or we shall wheedle him to speak some treasurably words; and then we shall prevail against him, and take our revenge on him for telling us of our faults, and threatening us with the judgments of God." Not so, for he was under the prudence of the serpent to help it, can secure men from unjust censure and false accusation.

II. Here is an account of the temptation he was in, under this affliction; his feet were almost gone, as the Psalmist's, Ps. xxxi. 2. And this is that which is to be most dreaded in affliction, being driven to it by sin, Num. xvi. 3. He was tempted to quarrel with God for making him a prophet. This he begins with; (v. 7.) O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived. This, as we read it, sounds very harsh. God's servants have been always ready to own that he is a faithful Mister, and never cheated them; and therefore this is the language of Jeremiah's folly and corruption. If, when God called him to be a prophet, and told him he would set him over the kingdom, (ch. i. 16.) and make him a defended city, he flattered himself with an expectation of having universal respect paid him as a messenger from heaven, and living safe and easy, and afterward it proved otherwise, he must not say that God had deceived him, but that he had deceived himself; for he knew how much the spirit of prophecy in those days was persecuted, and had no reason to expect better treatment. Nay, God had expressly told him that all the princes, priests, and people of the land, would fight against him, (ch. i. 19.) which he had forgotten, else he would not have let the blame on God that, Christ thus told his disciples what opposition they should expect with whom they were sent; (Matt. x. 1, 2.) But the words may very well be read thus, Thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded; it is the same word that was used, Gen. ix. 27, margin, God shall persuade Japhet. And Prov. xxv. 15. By much forbearance is a prince persuaded. And Hos. iv. 14. I will allure her. And this agrees with what was said before; "They were stronger than I, didst over-personalise me. now I say dost overpower me by the influence of thy Spirit upon me, and thou hast prevailed." Jeremiah was very backward to undertake the prophetic office, he pleaded that he was under age, and unfit for the service; but God overruled his pleas, and told him that he must go, ch. i. 6, 7. Now, Lord," says he, "since thou hast put this office upon me, why dost thou not stand by me in it? Had I thrust myself upon it, I might justly have been in derision; but why am I so when thou didst thrust me into it. It was Jeremiah's infirmity to complain thus of God, as putting a hardship upon him in calling him to be a prophet, which he would not have done, had he considered the lasting honour thereby done him, and the power, and the providence, and the glory, and the king of Babylon. Note. As long as we see ourselves in the view of God and duty, it is weakness and folly, when we meet with difficulties and discouragements in it, to wish we had never set out in it.

2. He was tempted to quit his work, and give it over; partly because he himself met with so much hardship in it, and partly because those to whom he was sent, instead of being edified and made better, were exasperated and made worse; (v. 9.) "Then I said, Since by prophesying in the name of the Lord I gain nothing to him or myself but dishonour and disgrace, I will not make mention of him as my Author for any thing I say, nor speak any more in his name; since my enemies do all they can to silence me, I will even silence myself, and speak no more, since I may as well speak to the stones as to them." Note, It is strong temptation to poor ministers to resolve that they will preach no more, when they see their preaching slighted and wholly ineffectual. But let people dread putting their ministers into this temptation. Let not their labour be in vain with us, lest we provoke them to say that they will take no more pains with us, and provoke God to charge our sins upon us, to the punishment, to the curse, of the congregation. Yet let not ministers hearken to this temptation, but go on in their duty, notwithstanding their discouragements, for this is the more thank-worthy; and though Israel be not gathered, yet they shall be glorious.

III. Here is an account of his faithful adherence to this work, and cheerful dependence on his God, notwithstanding.

1. He found the grace of God mighty in him to keep him to his business, notwithstanding the temptation he was in to throw it up; "I said, in my haste, I will speak no more in his name, what I have in my heart to deliver I will stifle and suppress; but I soon found it was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, which flowed inward; and must have vent, it was impossible to smother it; I was like a man in a burning fever, uneasy, and in a continual agitation; while I kept silence from good, my heart was hot within me, it was pain and grief to me, and I must speak, that I may be refreshed;" Ps. xxxix. 2, 3. Job xxxvii. 20. While I kept silence, my bones wasted old, Ps. xxxix. 3. See the power of the spirit of prophecy in those days was actuated by it, and thus will a holy zeal for God even eat men up, and make them forget themselves. I believed, therefore have I spoken. Jeremiah was soon weary
with forbearing to preach, and could not contain himself; nothing puts faithful ministers to pain so much as being silenced, nor to terror so much as silencing themselves. Their convictions will soon triumph over temptations of that kind; for, *Wo is unto me if I preach not the gospel, whatever it cost me*, 1 Cor. ix. 16. And it is really a mercy to have the word of God thus mighty in us to overpower our convictions.

He was assured of God's presence with him, which would be sufficient to battle all the attempts of his enemies against him; (v. 11.) "They say, *We shall prevail against him, the day will undoubtedly be our own; but I am sure that they shall not prevail, they shall not prosper, I can safely set them all at defiance, for the Lord is with me,*" is on my side, to take my part against them, (Rom. vii. 31.) to protect me from all their malicious designs upon me. He is with me, to support me and lay me up under the burthen which now presses me down. He is with me, to make the word I preach answer the end he designs, though not the end I desire. He is with me as a mighty terrible one, to strike a terror upon them, and so to overcome them.

Note, Even that in God which is terrible, is really comfortable to his servants that trust in him, for it shall be as terrible to his enemies as to his own people. God's being a mighty God, bespeaks him a terrible God to all those that take up arms against him, or any one that, like Jeremiah, was commissioned by him. How terrible will the wrath of God be to those that think to daunt all about them, and will themselves be daunted by nothing! The most formidable enemies that act against us, appear despised when we see the Lord for us in all the terrific scenes of his power. He is a terrible one, Neh. iv. 14. Jeremiah speaks now with a good assurance, "*If the Lord be with me, my persecutors shall stumble,* so that when they pursue me, they shall not overtake me, (Ps. xxvii. 2.) and then they shall be greatly ashamed of their impotent malice and fruitless attempts. Nay, their everlasting confusion and infamy shall never be forgotten; they shall not forget it themselves, but it shall be to them a constant and lasting vexation, whenever they think of it; others shall not forget it, but it shall leave upon them an indelible reproach."

3. He appeals to God against them as a righteous Judge, and prays judgment upon his cause, v. 12. He looks upon God as the God that tries the righteous, takes cognizance of them, and of every cause that they are interested in. He does not judge in favor of the false and the wicked; but he takes care, in finding that they have right on their side, and their persecutors wrong them and are injurious to them, he gives sentence for them. He that tries the righteous, tries the unrighteous too, and he is very well qualified to do both. For sees the reins and the heart, he certainly knows men's thoughts and affections, their aims and intentions, and therefore can pass an unerring judgment upon their words and actions. Now this is the God, (1.) To whom the prophet here refers himself, and in whose court he lodges his appeal; *Unto thee have I opened my cause.* Not but that God perfectly knew his cause, and all the merits of it, without his opening; but the cause we commit to God we must spread before him, he knows it, but he will know it from us, and allows us nothing but the opinion we put upon it, not him, but to affect ourselves. Note, It will be an ease to our spirits, when we are oppressed and b euthertened, to open our cause to God, and pour out our complaints before him. (2.) By whom he expects to be righted: *Let me see thy vengeance upon them,* such vengeance as thou thinkest fit to take for their conviction and my vindication, the vengeance thou wast to take on persecutors.

Note, Whatever injuries are done us, we must not study to avenge ourselves, but must leave it to that God to do it, to whom vengeance belongs, and who hath said, I will repay.

4. He greatly rejoices and praises God, in a full confidence that God would appear for his deliverance, v. 13. So full is he of the comfort of God's presence with him, that the divine protection is under, and the divine promise he has to depend upon, that in a transport of joy he stirs up himself and other[s], and thus gives God the glory of it; *Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord.* Here was a great change with him since he began this dis course; the clouds are blown over, his complaints all silenced, and turned into thanksgivings. He has now an entire confidence in God whom (v. 7.) he was disturbing; he stirs up himself to praise that Name which (v. 9.) he was resolving no more to make mention of. It was the lively exercise of faith, that turned his sighs into songs, and his trembling into triumphs. It is proper to express our hope in God by our praising him, and our praising God by our singing to him. That which is the matter of the praise is, *He hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of the evil-doers;* he means especially himself, his own poor soul.

Note, Those that are faithful in well-doing need not fear those that are spiteful in evil-doing, for they have a God to trust to, who has well-doers under the hand of his protection, and evil-doers under the hand of his restraint.

14. Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. 15. Cursed be the man that brought tidings to my father, saying, A man-child is born unto thee; making him very glad. 16. And let that man be as the cities which the Lord overthrew, and repented not; and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noon-tide; 17. Because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb to be always great with me. 18. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?

What is the meaning of this? Does there proceed out of the same mouth blessing and cursing? Could he that said so cheerfully, (v. 13.) *Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord,* say so passionately, (v. 14.) *Cursed be the day wherein I was born?* How shall we reconcile these? What have we in these verses the prophet records, I suppose, to his own shame, and not to be suffered to pass over; but to affect ourselves. Note, It will be an ease to our spirits, when we are oppressed and b euthertened, to open our cause to God, and pour out our complaints before him. (2.) By whom he expects to be righted: *Let me see thy vengeance upon them,* such vengeance as thou thinkest fit to take for their conviction and my vindication, the vengeance thou wast to take on persecutors.

Note, Whatever injuries are done us, we must not study to avenge ourselves, but must leave it to that God to do it, to whom vengeance belongs, and who hath said, I will repay.
be ashamed of ourselves and our own folly, may admire the goodness of God in not taking us at our word, and may be warned by it to dible our guard upon our spirits, another time. See here how strong the temptation was, which the prophet, by divine assistance, got the victory over, and how far he yielded to it, that we may not despair, if we through the weakness of the flesh be at any time thus tempted.

Let us see here,

1. What the prophet's language was, in this temptation.

(1.) He fastened a brand of infamy upon his birth-day, as Job did in a heat; (ch. iii. 1.) "Curse be the day wherein I was born. It was an ill day to me, (v. 14.) because it was the beginning of sorrows, and an inlet to all this misery." It is a wish that he had never been born. Judas in hell had reason to wish so: (Matth. xxvi. 24.) but no man on earth has reason to wish so, because he knows not but that he may yet become a vessel of mercy, much less has any good man reason to wish so. Whereas some keep their birth-day, at the return of the year, with gladness, he will look upon his birth-day as a melancholy day, and will solemnize it with sorrows, and will have it looked upon as an ominous day.

(2.) He wished ill to the messenger that brought his father the news of his birth, v. 15. It made his father very glad to hear that he had a child born, (perhaps it was his first-born,) especially that it was a man-child, for then being of the family of the priests, he might live to have the honour of serving God's altar; and yet he is ready to curse the man that brought him the tidings, when perhaps the father to whom they were brought, gave him a gratitude for it. Here Mr. Gataker well observes, "That parents are often much rejoiced at the birth of their children, when, if they did foresee what misery they are born to, they would rather lament over them than rejoice in them." He is very free and very fierce in the curses he pronounces upon the messenger of his birth; (v. 16.) "Let him be as the cities of Saldoan and Gomorrah, which the Lord utterly overthrew, and repented not, did not in the least mitigate or alleviate their misery. Let him hear the cry of the invading, besieging enemy in the morning, as soon as he is stirring, then let him take the alarm, and by noon let him hear their shouting for victory. And thus let him live in constant terror.

(3.) He is angry that the fate of the Hebrews' children in Egypt was not his, that he was not slain from the womb, that his first breath was not his last, and that he was not strangled as soon as he came into the world, v. 17. He wishes the messenger of his birth had been better employed, and had been his murderer; nay, that his mother of whom he was born, had been, to her great misery, and to the great, of woman and child, so, the womb in which he was conceived, would have abolished, without more ado, as a grave for him to be buried in. Job intimates a near alliance and resemblance between the womb and the grave; (Job i. 21.) Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither.

(4.) He thinks his present calamities sufficient to justify these passionate wishes; (v. 18.) "Wherefore came I forth out of the womb, where I lay hid, was not seen, was not hated, where I lay safe, and knew no evil, to see all this labour and sorrow, nay to have my days consumed with shame, to be continually vexed and abused, to have my life not only spent in trouble, but wasted and worn away by trouble."

What use we may make of this. It is not recorded for our imitation, and yet we may learn good lessons from it.

(1.) See the vanity of human life, and the vexation of spirit that attends it. If there were not another life after this, we should be tempted many a time to wish that we had never known this, for our few days here are full of trouble.

(2.) See the folly and absurdity of sinful passion, how unreasonably it talks when it is suffered to ramble. What nonsense is it to curse a day—to curse a messenger for the sake of his message! What a brutish, barbarous thing for a child to wish his own mother had never been delivered of him! See some as xxx. 10. c in the folly of others, and should take warning thence to suppress all such intemperate heats and passions in ourselves, to stiffle them at first, and not to suffer these evil spirits to speak. When the heart is hot, let the tongue be bridled, Ps. xxxix. 1, 2.

(3.) See the weakness even of good men, who are but men at the best. See how much those who think they stand, are concerned to take heed lest they fall, and to pray daily, Father in heaven, lead us not into temptation!

CHAP. XXI.

It is plain that the prophecies of this book are not placed here in the same order in which they were preached; for there are chapters after this, which concern Jehoiakim, Jehoiakim, and Jecohiam, who all reigned before Zedekiah, in whose reign the prophecy of this chapter expires. Here is, 1. The message which Zedekiah sent to the prophet, to desire him to inquire of the Lord for them, v. 1, 2. 2. The answer which Jeremiah, in God's name, sent to that message; in which, 1. He foretells the certain and inevitable ruin of the city, and the fruitlessness of their attempts for its preservation, v. 3. 7. He advises the people to make the best of had, by going over to the king of Babylon, v. 8. 10. 3. He advises the king and his family to repent and reform, (v. 11, 12,) and not to trust to the strength of their city, and grow secure, v. 13, 14.

1. The word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, when king Zedekiah sent unto him Paschur the son of Melechiah, and Zaphaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, saying, 2. Inquire, I pray thee, of the Lord for us; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon maketh war against us; if so be that the Lord will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us. 3. Then said Jeremiah unto them, Thus shall ye say to Zedekiah, 4. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls, and I will assemble them into the midst of this city. 5. And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand, and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath. 6. And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast: they shall die of a great pestilence. 7. And afterward, saith the Lord, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in this city from the pesti-
Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life: and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy.

Here is, a very humble, decent message which King Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah the prophet, when he was in distress. It is indeed charged upon this Zedekiah, that he humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord; (2 Chron. xxxvi. 12.) he did not always humble himself as he did sometimes; he never humbled himself till necessity forced him to it; he humbled himself so far as to desire the prophet's assistance, but not so far as to take his advice, or to be ruled by him. Observe,

1. The distress which King Zedekiah was now in: 

2. The messengers he sent, Pashur and Zedkiah, one belonging to the 5th course of the priests, the other to the 24th. 1 Chron. xxiv. 9, 18. It was well that he sent, that he sent persons of rank; it had been better if he had desired a personal conference with the prophet, which, no doubt, he might easily have had if he would so far have humbled himself: Perhaps these priests were no better than the rest, and yet, when they were commanded by the king, must carry a respectful message to the prophet, which was both a mortification to them and an honour to Jeremiah. He had rashly said, (ch. xx. 18.) My days are consumed with shame; and yet here we find that he lived to see better days than these were, when he made that complaint; now he appears in reputation. Note, It is folly to say, when things are bad with us, They will always be so. It is possible that those who are despised, may come to be respected; and it is promised, that those who honour God, he will honour, and that those who have afflicted his people, shall bow to them, Isa. lx. 14.

3. The message itself, Inquire, I pray thee, of the Lord for us, v. 2. Now that the Chaldean army was got into the city, and come to their bowels, they were at length convinced that Jeremiah was a true prophet, though loath to own it, and brought too late to it. Under this conviction, they desire him to stand their friend with God, believing him to have that interest in heaven, which none of their other prophets had, who had flattered them with hopes of peace. They now employ Jeremiah, (1.) To consult the mind of God for them: Inquire of the Lord for us. Note, The care of our present state, for the measures we have hitherto taken are all broken. Note, Those that will not take the direction of God's grace, how to get clear of their sins, would yet be glad of the directions of his providence, how to get clear of their troubles. (2.) To seek the favour of God for them: so some read it: Entreat the Lord for us; be an intercessor for us. Note, The prayers of God's people and ministers when they are in prosperity, may perhaps be glad of an interest in them when they come to be in distress. Give us of your oil. The benefit they promise themselves, is, It may be, the Lord will deal with us according to the wondrous works he wrought for our fathers, that the enemy may raise the siege, and go off from us. Observe, [1.] All their care is, to get rid of their trouble: not to make their peace with God, and be reconciled to him: That our enemy may go up from us; not, That our God may return to us. Thus Pharaoh, (Exod. x. 17) Entreat the Lord that he may take away this death. [2.] All their hope is, that God had done wondrous works formerly in the deliverance of Jerusalem when Sennacherib besieged it, at the prayer of Isaiah: so we are told, 2 Chron. xxxii. 20, 21. And why may not this be done now? for the same prayer was then not only offered at the prayer of Jeremiah? But they did not consider how different the character of Zedekiah and his people was from that of Hezekiah and his people: those were days of general reformation and piety, these of general corruption and apostacy. Jerusalem is now the reverse of what it was then. Note, It is folly to think that God should do for us while we hold fast our iniquity, as he did for those that held fast their integrity.

II. A very startling, cutting reply, which God, by the prophet, sent to that message. If Jeremiah had been to have answered the message of himself, we have reason to think that he would have returned a comfortable answer, in hope their sending of such a message was an indication of some good purposes in them, which he would be glad to make the subject of conversation with them. But in this message, he did not consider with whom God was dealing; who knew their hearts better than Jeremiah does, and sends them an answer which hath scarcely one word of comfort in it. He sends it them in the name of the Lord God of Israel, (v. 3.) to intimate to them, that though God allowed himself to be called the God of Israel, and had done great things for Israel formerly, and had still great things in store for Israel, yet he did not covenant with them, yet this should stand the present generation in no stead, who were Israelites in name only, and not in deed, any more than God's dealings with them should cut off his retribution to Israel as their God. It is here foretold,

1. That God will render all their endeavours for their own security fruitless and ineffectual; (v. 4.) I will be so far from teaching your hands to war, and putting an edge upon your swords, that I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hand, when you sally out upon the besiegers to beat them off, so that they shall not give the stroke you design; may, they shall recoil into your own faces, and be turned upon yourselves. Nothing can make for those who have God against them.

2. That the besiegers shall in a little time make themselves masters of Jerusalem, and of all its wealth and honour; in a little time they shall make this city, who are now surrounding it. Note, If that place, which should have been a centre of devotion, be made a centre of wickedness, it is not strange if God make it a rendezvous of destroyers.

3. That God himself will be their Enemy; and then I know not who can befriended them, no, not Jeremiah himself; (v. 5.) I will be so far from presenting myself against the enemies of Jerusalem, as that I should, in this case, that I myself will fight against you. Note, Those who rebel against God may justly expect that he will make war upon them; and that, (1.) With the power of a God who is irresistibly victorious: I will fight against you with an outstretched hand, which will reach far, and with a strong arm, which will strike home, and wound deep. (2.) With the vengeance is, which is God's, which is a dreadful vengeance. It is a correction in love, but an execution in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath; it is upon a sentence sworn in wrath, against which there will be no exception; and it will soon be found what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God.

4. That these who, for their own safety, decline sallying out upon the besiegers, and so avoid their sword, shall yet not escape the sword of God's justice; (v. 6.) I will smite those that abide in the city,
(so it may be read,) both man and beast; both the beasts that are for food, and those that are for service; for, saith the Lord, they shall die of a great pestilence, which shall rage among them, while the enemies are encamped about them. Though Jerusalem's gates and walls may for a time keep out the Chaldeans, they cannot keep out God's judgments. His arrows of pestilence can reach those that think themselves safe from other arrows.

3. That the king himself, and all the people that escape the sword, famine, and pestilence, shall fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, who shall cut them off in cold blood; (v. 7.) They shall not share them, nor have pity on them. Let not them expect to find mercy with men, who have forfeited God's compassion, and shut themselves out from his mercy. Thus was the decree gone forth; and then to what purpose was it for Jeremiah to inquire of the Lord for them?

8. And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death. 9. He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey. 10. For I have set my face against this city, for evil, and not for good, saith the Lord; it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire. 11. And touching the house of the king of Judah, say, Hear ye the word of the Lord: 12. O house of David, thus saith the Lord, Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver htm that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings. 13. Behold, I am against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, and rock of the plain, saith the Lord; which say, Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations? 14. But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the Lord: and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all things round about it.

By the civil message which the king sent to Jeremiah, it appeared that both he and the people began to have a respect for him, which it had been Jer-emiah's policy to make some advantage of for himself; but the reply which God obliges him to make, is enough to crush the little respect they begin to have for him, and to exasperate them against him more than ever. Not only the predictions in the foregoing verses, but the prescriptions in these, were provoking; for here, the people are told not to surrender and desert to the Chaldeans, as the only means left them to save their lives, v. 8.—10. This counsel was very displeasing to those who were flattered by their false prophets into a desperate resolution to hold out to the last extremity, trusting to the strength of their walls and courage of their soldiery, to keep out the enemy, or to their foreign aids and aids of siege. The prophet assures them, "The city shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall not only plunder it, but burn it with fire, for God himself hath set his face against this city for evil, and not for good, to lay it waste, and not to protect it, for evil which shall have no good mixed with it, no mitigating or modifying, and therefore if you would make the best of bad, you must beg quarter of the Chaldeans, and surrender prisoners of war." It came to pass that Rabshakeh persuaded the Jews to do this while they had God for them, (Isa. xxxvi. 16.) but it was the best course they could take now that God was against them. Both the law and the prophets had often set before them life and death in another sense—life, if they did evil; and death, if they persist in disobedience. (Deut. xxx. 19.) But they had slighted that life which would have made them truly happy, to upbraid them with which the prophet here uses the same expression; (v. 8.) Be- hold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death, which denotes not, as that, a fair proposal, but a melancholy dilemma, advising them of two evils to choose the least; and that lesser evil, a shameful and wretched captivity, is all the life now left for them to propose to themselves. He that abides in the city, and trusts to that to secure them, shall certainly die either by the sword without the walls, or famine or pestilence within. But he that can so far bring down his spirit, and quit his vain hopes, as to come down into the hands of the Chaldeans, his life shall be given him for a prey; (v. 10.) but with much difficulty and hazard, as a prey is taken from the mighty. It is an expression like that, He shall be saved, yet so as by fire. He shall escape, but very narrowly; or, he shall have such surprising joy and satisfaction in escaping with his life from such a universal destruction, as shall equal their hope that divide the spoil. They thought they had made a prey of the camp of the Chaldeans, as their ancestors did that of the Assyrians, (Isa. xxxii. 23.) but they will be sadly disappointed; if by yielding it discretion, they can but save their lives, that is all the prey they must premise themselves. Now one would think this advice from a prophet, in God's name, should have gained some credit with them, and been universally followed; but, for aught that appears, there were few or none that took it; so wretchedly were their hearts hardened to their destruction.

2. He advises the king and princes to reform, and make conscience of the duty of their place. Because it was the king that sent the message to him, in the reply there shall be a particular word for the house of the king of Judah, and their princes, the king, (that was no part of a prophet's business, to name then they did him the honour to send to him,) but to give them wholesome counsel; (v. 11, 12.) Execute judgment in the morning; do it carefully and diligently. These magistrates that would fill up their place with duty, had need rise betimes. Do it quickly, and do not delay to do justice upon appeals made to you, and tire out patience with those that have done. Do not lie in your beds in the morning, to sleep away the debauch of the night before, nor spend the morning in panpering the body, (as those princes, Ecel. x. 16.) but spend it in the despatch of business. You would be delivered out of the hand of those that distress you, and expect that these God should do you justice; see then that you do justice to those that apply themselves to you, and deliver them out of the hand of their oppressors, lest my fury go out like fire against you in a particular manner, and you fare worse, who think to escape best, because of the evil of your doings. Now, (1.) This intimates that it was their neglect to do their duty, that brought all this desolation upon the people. It was the desire of the princes, that God should give them the fire of God's wrath. Thus plainly does he deal even with the house of the king; for those that would have the benefit of a prophet's prayers, must think-
fully take a prophet's reproofs. (2.) This directs them to take the right method for a national reformation. The princes must begin, and set a good example, and then the people will be invited to reform. They must use their power for the punishment of wrong, and then the people will be obliged to reform. He reminds them that they are the House of David, and therefore should tread in his steps, who executed judgment and justice to his people. (3.) This gives them a general encouragement to hope that they may find a lengthening of their temporal quaility, Dan. iv. 27. If any thing will recover their state from the brink of ruin, this will.

3. He shows them the vanity of all their hopes so long as they continued unreformed, v. 13, 14. Jerusalem is an inhabitant of the valley, guarded with mountains on all sides, which were their natural fortifications, making it difficult for an army to approach them. It is a rock of the plain, which makes it difficult for an army to undermine these. These advantages of their situation they trusted to more than to the power and promise of God; and thinking their city by these means to be impregnable, they set the judgments of God at defiance, saying, "Who shall come down against us? None of our neighbours dare make a descent upon us; or, if they do, who can enter into our situation?" They had good colour for this confidence; for it appears to have been the sense of all their neighbours that no enemy could force his way into Jerusalem, Lam. iv. 12.

But those are least safe, that are most secure. God soon shows the vanity of that challenge, "Who shall come down against us?" when he says, (v. 13.) Behold, I am against thee. They had indirectly by their wickedness driven God out of their city, when he would have tarried with them as a Friend; but they could not by their bulwarks keep him out of their city, when he came against them as an Enemy. If God be for us, who can be against us? But if he be against us, who can be for us, to stand us in any stead? Nay, he comes against them not as an Enemy that may lawfully and with some hope of success be resisted, but as a Judge that cannot be resisted; for he says, (v. 14.) I will punish you, by due course of law, according to the fruit of your doings, according to the merit of them, and the direct tendency of them. That shall be brought upon you, which is the natural product of sin. Nay, he will not only come with the anger of an enemy, and the justice of a judge, but with the force of a consuming fire, which has no compassion, as a judge sometimes has, nor spares any thing combustible, that comes in its way. Jerusalem is become a forerunner of those in which God will kindle a fire that shall consume all before it; for our God is himself a consuming Fire; and who is able to stand in his sight, when once he is angry.

CHAP. XXII.

Upon occasion of the message sent in the foregoing chapter to the house of the king, we have here recorded some sermons which Jeremiah preached at court, in some preceding reigns, that he might and again they had had fair warning long before that fatal sentence was pronounced upon them, and were put in a way to have prevented it. Here is, I. A message sent to the royal family, as it should seem, in the reign of Jehoiakim, relating partly to Jehohaz, who was carried away with his father to Egypt, and partly to Jehoiakim, who succeeded him, and was now upon the throne. The king and princes are exhorted to repentance, and are assured that, if they do so, the royal family would be restored, but otherwise it should be ruined, v. 1-9. Jehoahaz, called here, Shallum, is lamented, v. 10, 11. Jehoiakim is reproved and reproved, v. 12, 13.

II. Another message sent them in the reign of Jehoiakim, alias Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim. He is charged with an obstinate refusal to hear, and is threatened with destruction, and it is foretold, that in him Solomon's house should fall, v. 20-30.

1. Thus saith the Lord, Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, 2. And say, Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, that sitteth upon the throne of David, this and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates; 3. Thus saith the Lord, Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place. 4. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings, sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people. But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation. 6. For thus saith the Lord unto the king's house of Judah: Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon: yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited. 7. And I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons; and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast them into the fire. 8. And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbour, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this great city? 9. Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them.

Here we have,

1. Orders given to Jeremiah to preach before the king. In the chapter before, Zedekiah sent messengers to the prophet, but here the prophet is bidden to go, in his own proper person, to the house of the king, and demand his attention to the word of the King of kings; (v. 2.) Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah. Subjects must own, that where the word of a king is, there is power over them; but kings must own, that where the word of the Lord is, there is power over them. The King of Judah is here spoken to, as sitting upon the throne of David, who was a man after God's own heart, as holding their dignity and power by the covenant made with him; let them therefore conform to his example, that they may have the benefit of the promises made to him. With the king his servants are spoken to, because a good government depends upon a good people, and a good people upon a good king.

II. Instructions given him what to preach. 1. He must tell them what was their duty, what was the good which the Lord their God required of them, v. 3. They must take care, (1.) That they do all the good they can with the power they have. They must do justice, in defence of those that were injured, and must deliver the spoilt out of the hand of their oppressors. This was the duty of their place, Ps. Lxxiii. 3. Herein they must be ministers of God for good. (2.) That they do no hurt to it, no wrong, no violence. That is the greatest wrong and violence, which is done under colour of law and justice, and by those whose business it is to punish and protect from wrong and violence.
They must do no wrong to the stranger, fatherless, and widow; for these God does in a particular manner patronize, and take under his tuition, Exod. xxii. 21, 22.

2. He must assure them that the faithful discharge of their duty would advance and secure their prosperity; v. 4. There shall then be a succession of kings, an uninterrupted succession, upon the throne of David, and of his line; these enjoying a perfect tranquillity. Their country living in great dignity, riding on chariots, and horses, as before, ch. xvii. 25. Note, The most effectual way to preserve the dignity of the government, is, to do the duty of it.

3. He must likewise assure them that the iniquity of their family, if they persisted in it, would be the ruin of their family, though it was a royal family; (v. 5.) If they will not hear, will not obey, this house shall become a desolation, the palace of the kings of Judah shall fare no better than other habitations in Jerusalem. Sin has often been the ruin of royal palaces, though ever so stately, ever so strong. This sentence is ratified by an oath; I swear by myself, (and God can swear by no greater, Heb. vi. 13.) that this house shall be laid in ruins. Note, Sins will be the ruin of the houses of princes as well as of mean men.

4. He must show how fatal their wickedness would be to their kingdom as well as to themselves, to Jerusalem especially, the royal city, v. 6.-9. (1.) It is confessed that Judah and Jerusalem had been valuable in God's eyes, and considerable in their own; Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of my strength. But perhaps they were cast in a place that was rich and plentiful as Gilead; Zion was a strong hold, as stately as Lebanon: this they trusted to as their security. But, (2.) This shall not protect them; the country that is now fruitful as Gilead, shall be made a wilderness. The cities that are now strong as Lebanon, shall be cities not inhabited; and when the country is laid waste, the cities must be despoiled. See how easily God's judgments can ruin a nation, and how certainly sin will do it.

When this desolating work is to be done, [1.] There shall be those that shall do it effectually; (v. 7.) "I will prepare destroyers against thee; I will sanctify them," (so the word is;) "I will appoint them to this service and use them in it." Note, When destruction is designed, destroyers are prepared; they are brought into the preparing, and things are working toward the designed destruction, and are getting ready for it, long before. And who can contend with the destroyers of God's preparing? They shall destroy cities as easily as men fell trees in a forest; They shall cut down thy choice cedars; and yet, when they are down, shall value them no more than thorns or briars; they shall be cut down, and the fire, for their choicest cedars, be become rotten ones, and good for nothing else. [2.] There shall be those who shall be ready to justify God in the doing of it; (v. 8, 9.) persons of many nations, when they pass by the ruins of this city in their travels, will ask, "Therefore hath the Lord done thus unto this city? How came so strong a city to be overpowered? So rich a city to be impoverished? So holy a city to be profaned? And a city that had been so dear to God, to be abandoned by him? The reason is so obvious, that it shall be ready in every man's mouth. Ask them that go by the way, Job xxx. 29. Ask the next man you meet, and he will tell you it was, because they changed their gods, which other nations never thought to do. They forsook their own God, and cast from their allegiance to him, and from the duty which their covenant with him bound them to, and they worshipped other gods, and served them, in contempt of him; and therefore he gave them up to this destruction. Note, God never casts any off until they first cast him off. "Go," says God to the prophet, "and preach this to the royal family."

10. Weep ye not for the dead, neither bewail him; but weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country. 11. For thus saith the Lord touching Shallum the son of Josiah king of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which went forth out of this place, He shall not return thither any more: 12. But he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more. 13. Wo unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; 14. That saith, I will build me a wide house, and large chambers, and cutteh him out windows: and it is cooled with ceder, and painted with vermilion! 15. Shall thou reign because thou closest thyself in cedars? Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? 16. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the Lord. 17. But thine eyes and thy heart are not but for thy coveteousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence to do it. 18. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoahaz the son of Josiah king of Judah. They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! 19. He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

Kings, though they are gods to us, are men to God, and shall die like men; so it appears in these verses, where we have a sentence of death post upon two kings who reigned successively in Jerusalem, two brothers, and both the ungracious sons of a very pious father.

1. Here is the doom of Shallum, who doubtless is the same with Jehoahaz, for he is that son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned in the stead of Josiah his father, (v. 11.) which Jehoahaz did by the act of the people who made him king, though he was not the eldest son, 2 Kings xxiii. 30. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 1. Among the sons of Josiah (1 Chron. iii. 13.) there is one Shallum mentioned, and not Jehoahaz. Perhaps the people preferred him before his elder brother, because they thought him a more active, daring young man, and fitter to rule; but God soon showed them the folly of their injustice, and that it could not prosper, for within three months the kings of Egypt came upon them, deposed him, and carried him away prisoner into Egypt, as God had threatened. Deut. xxxvii. 15. But it does not appear that any of the people were taken into captivity with him. We have the story, 2 Kings xxiii. 34. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 4. Now here,

1. The people are directed to lament him rather
than his father Jeremiah: "WEEP not for the dead, weep not any more for Jeremiah." Jeremiah had been himself a true mourner for his father, and had stirred up the people to mourn for him; (2 Chron. xxxvi. 25.) yet now he will have them go out of mourning for him, though it was but three months after his death, and to turn their tears into another channel, they must not only be comforted, but be set to work to build chambers, and not that there was any great loss of him to the public, as there was of his father, but that his case was much more deplorable. Josiah went to the grave in peace and honour, was prevented from seeing the evil to come in this world, and removed to see the good to come in the other world; and therefore, WEEP not for him, but for his unhappy son, who is like a biter to his own mouth, as the prophet had foretold, that it was wretched captive. Note, Dying saints may be justly envied, while living sinners are justly pitted. And so dismal perhaps the prospect of the times may be, that tears even for a Josiah, even for a Jesus, must be restrained, that they may be reserved for ourselves and for our children, Luke xxiii. 28.

2. The reason given is, because he shall never return, or be recovered, but must die, and shall die there. They were loath to believe this, therefore it is repeated here again and again, he shall return no more, v. 10. He shall never have the pleasure of seeing his native country, but shall have the continual grief of hearing of the desolations of it. He is gone forth out of this place, and shall never return, v. 11. He shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, v. 12. This is of his breaking the good example of his father, and usurping the right of his elder brother. In Ezekiel's lamentation for the princes of Israel, this Jehoahaz is represented as a young lion, that soon learned to catch the fayre, but was taken, and brought in chains to Egypt, and was long expected to return, but in vain. See Ezek. xiii. 3—5.

II. Here is the doom of Jehoiakim, who succeeded him. Whether he had any better right to the crown than Shallum, we know not; for though he was elder than his predecessor, there seems to be another son of Josiah, elder than he, called Johanan, 1 Chron. iii. 15. But this we know, he ruled no better, and fared no better at last. Here is,

1. His sins faithfully reproved. It is not fit for a private person to say to a king, Thou art wicked; but the prophet, who was a prophet of the Lord, did nothing contrary to God's will. He reveals his trust if he does not deliver it, be it ever so unpleasing, even to kings themselves. Jehoiakim is not here charged with idolatry, and, probably, he had not yet put Urijah the prophet to death, (as we find afterward he did, ch. xxvi. 22, 23.) for then he would have been told of it here; but the crimes for which he is here reproved, are, (1.) Pride, and affectation of pomp and splendour, and the building of a kind of palace, v. 13, 14. Nay, it must exceed that, for it must be painted with mummy, or vermilion, which dyes red, or, as some read it, with indigo, which dyes blue. No doubt, it is lawful for princes and great men to build and beautify and furnish their houses, so as is agreeable to their dignity; but he that knows what is in man, knew that Jehoiakim did this in the pride of his heart. He had no need of that which was precious and necessary, but which is in itself unlawful. Those therefore that are enriching their houses, and making them more sumptuous, have need to look well to the frame of their own spirits in the doing of it, and carefully to watch against all the workings of vanity. But that which was particularly amiss in Jehoiakim's case, was, that he did this when he could not but perceive, both by the word of God, and by his providence, that divine judgments were breaking in upon him. He reigned his three first years as a prince, without any fear or expectation of any inroads of Egypt, and all the rest by the permission and allowance of the king of Babylon; and yet he that was no better than a viceroy, will covet to live with the greatest monarch in building and furniture. Observe how peremptory he is in this resolution; "I will build me a wide house; I am resolved I will, whoever advises me to the contrary." Note, It is no easy matter to break the pride of a prince, to make him think something unworthy of him and his estates, to covet to make a fair show. Many have unhumbled hearts under humbling providences, and look most naughtily then when God is bringing them down. This is striving with our Maker. (2.) Carnal security and confidence in his wealth, depending upon the continuance of his prosperity, as if his mountain now stood so strong, that it could never be moved, and that he must reign without any disturbance or interruption, even as long as he had himself in cedar, (v. 15.) as if that were too fine to be assaulted, and too strong to be broken through, and as if God himself could not, for pity, give up such a stately house as that to be burned. This when Christ spake of the destruction of the temple, his disciples came to him, to show him what a magnificent structure it was, Matt. xxiii. 21, 22. Note, These wrote themselves, who think their present prosperity is a lasting security, and dream of reigning, because they are enclosed in cedar. It is but in his own conceit, that the rich man's wealth is his strong city. (3.) Some think he is here charged with sacrilege, and robbing the house of God to beautify and adorn his own house. He cut him out my windows; so it is in the margin, which some understand as if he had taken windows out of the temple to put into his own palace, and then painted them (as it follows) with vermilion, that it might not be discovered, but might look of a piece with his own building. Note, Those cheat themselves, and ruin themselves at last, who think to enrich themselves by robbing God and his house; and however they may disguise their action, they have no way to cover their iniquity but with money unjustly got, and materials which were not honestly come by, and perhaps upon ground obtained as Ahab obtained Naboth's vineyard. And because he went beyond what he could afford, he defrauded his workmen of their wages, which is one of the sins of which they are guilty in the church of God, v. 4. God takes notice of the wrong done by the greatest of men to their poor servants and laborers, and will repay them, in justice, that will not in justice pay those whom they employ, but use their neighbours' service without wages. Observe, The greatest of men must look upon the meanest as their neighbours, and he just to them accordingly, and love that gives himself to the service of the poor. Observe, not only in his buildings, but in the administration of his government. He did not do justice, made no conscience of shedding innocent blood, when it was to serve the purposes of his ambition, avarice, and revenge. He was all for oppression and violence; not to threaten it only, but to do it; and when he was set upon any act of injustice, nothing should stop him, but he would go through with it. And observe, the very profligacy and baseness, that love of money, which is the root of all evil. Thine eyes and thine heart are not but for covetousness; they were for that, and nothing else. Observe,
In covetousness the heart walks after the eyes: it is therefore called the lust of the eye, 1 John ii. 16. Job xxx. 7. It is setting the eyes upon that which is not, Prov. xxxiii. 5. "The eyes and the heart are then for covetousness, when the aims and affections are wholly set upon the wealth of this world; and where they are so, the temptation is strong to murmur, oppress others, and to be disposed to violence and violence."

Then, which aggravated all his sins, was, that he was the son of a good father, who had left him a good example, if he would but have followed it; (v. 15, 16.) Did not thy father eat and drink? When Jehoiakim enlarged and enlightened his house, it is probable that he spoke scornfully of his father for containing himself with such mean and inconvenient dwellings, and small food, in comparison with what he and his family had, in that time, a dull fancy, a low spirit, that could not find in his heart to lay out his money, nor cared for what was fashionable; that should not serve him, that served his father: but God, by the prophet, tells him that his father, though he had not the spirit of building, was a man of an excellent spirit, a better man than he, and did better for himself and for his family. Those parents' old-fashioned, commonly come short of their real excellencies. Jeremiah tells him,

[1.] That he was directed to do his duty by his father's practice; He did judgment and justice; he never did wrong to any of his subjects, never oppressed them, or put any hardship upon them, but was careful to preserve all their just rights and privileges, and did not abuse his power for the support of wrong, but he used it for the maintaining of right. He judged the cause of the poor and needy, was ready to hear the cause of the meanest of his subjects, and do them justice. Note, The care of magistrates must be, not to support their grandeur and take their case, but to do good; not only not to oppress the poor themselves, but to defend those that are oppressed.

[2.] That he was encouraged to do his duty by his father's prosperity. First, God accepted him; "Was not this to know me, saith the Lord? Did he not hereby make it to appear that he rightly knew his God, and worshipped him, and, consequently, was known and owned of him?" Note, The right knowledge of God consists in doing our duty, putting forth and maintaining it, and, for that, as the reward of it, he will establish us in our place and station in the world. Secondly, He himself had the comfort of it; Did he not eat and drink soberly and cheerfully, so as to fit himself for his business, for strength, and not for drunkenness? Exod. x. 17. He did eat, and drink, and do judgment; he did not (as perhaps Jehoiakim and his princes did) drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of the afflicted, Prov. xxx. 5. He did eat and drink; God blessed him with great plenty, and he had the comfortable enjoyment of it himself, and gave handsome entertainments to his friends, was very hospitable, and very charitable. It was Jehoiakim's pride, that he had built a fine house, but Josiah's true praise, that he kept a good house. Many times those have least in them of true generosity, and yet are enabled to show it in a large degree; for, to support the extravagant expense of hospitality, bounty to the poor, yea, and justice itself, will be pinned. It is better to live with Josiah in an old-fashioned house, and do good, than live with Jehoiakim in a stately house, and leave debts unpaid. Josiah did justice and judgment, and it was well with him; (v. 15.) and it is repeated again, He did eat and drink, and give judgment. Josephus says that Nehuchadnezzar slew him at Jerusalem, and left his body thus exposed, somewhere at a great distance from the gates of Jerusalem. It is said, (2 Kings xxiv. 6.) He slept with his fathers. When he built himself a stately house, no doubt he designed himself a stately sepulchre; but see how he was disappointed. Note, Those that are lifted up with great pride, are commonly reserved for some great disgrace in life or death.

20. Go up to Lebanon, and cry; and lift up thy voice in Bashan, and cry from the passages: for all thy lovers are destroyed.

21. I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear: this hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice. 22. The wind shall eat up all thy pastures, and thy lovers shall go into captivity: surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness. 23. Obi! inhabitant of Lebanon, that maketh thy nest in the cedars, low estates shall thou be when pangs come upon thee,
the pain of a woman in travail. 24. As I said, saith the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence; 25. And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans. 26. And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die. 27. But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return. 28. Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure! wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not? 29. O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord: 30. Thus saith the Lord. Write ye this man childless, a man thou shalt not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

This prophecy seems to have been calculated for the ungracious, inglorious reign of Jeconiah, or Jehoiakim, the son of Jehoiakim, who succeeded him in the government, reigned but three months, and was then carried captive to Babylon, where he lived many years, Jer. lii. 31. We have, in these verses, a prophecy,

I. Of the desolations of the kingdom, which were now hastening on space; v. 20. 23. Jerusalem and Judah are here spoken to, or the Jewish state as a single person, and we have it here under a threefold character.

1. Very haughty in a day of peace and safety; (v. 21.) "I spoke unto thee in thy prosperity; spake, by my servants the prophets, reproofs, admonitions, counsels, but thou wouldest not hear, I will not heed, thou obeyedst not my voice, and wast resolved that thou wouldest not hast, and hadst the front to tell me so." It is common for those that live at ease, to live in disesteem of the word of God. Jehoiakim was a good fat, and kicked. This is so much the worse, that they had it by kind; This has been thy manner from thy youth. They were called transgressors from the womb, Isa. xlviii. 8.

2. Very timorous upon the alarms of trouble; (v. 26.) "When thou seest all thy lovers destroyed, when thou findest these ideas unable to help thee, and thy foreign alliances failing thee, thou wilt then go up to Babylon, and cry, as one undone, and giving up all for lost, cry with a bitter cry; thou wilt cry, Help, help, or we are lost; thou wilt lift up thy voice in fearful shrieks, upon Lebanon and Bashan, two high hills, in hope to be heard from thence by the advantage of the rising ground. Thou wilt cry from the passages, from the roads, where thou wilt ever and anon be in distress." Thou wilt cry from Arabia, (as a wilderness,) and a famous mountain in the border of Moab. Thou wilt cry, as those that are in great consternation use to do, to all about thee; but in vain, for, (v. 22.) the wind shall eat up all thy pastors, or rulers, that should protect and lead thee, and provide for thy safety; they shall be blasted, and withered, and brought to nothing, as buds and blossoms are by a bleak or freezing wind; they shall be devoured suddenly, insensibly, and irresistibly, as fruits by the wind. They lovers, that so depended upon, and lost an affection for, shall go to captivity, and shall be so far from saving thee, that they shall not be able to save themselves.”

3. Very tame under the heavy and lasting pressures of trouble: "When there appears no relief from any of thy confederates, and thy own priests at a loss, then shall thou be ashamed, and confounded, all thy wickedness, v. 22. Note, Many will never be ashamed of old errors, sin brought by them to the last extremity; and it is well if we get this good by our straits, by them to be brought to confession for our sins. The Jewish state is here called an inhabitant of Lebanon, because that famous forest was within their border, (v. 23.) and all their country was wealthy, and well guarded with Lebanon's natural fastnesses; but so proud and haughty were they, that they are said to make their nest in the cedars, where they thought themselves out of the reach of all danger, and whence they looked with contempt upon all about them. But, how gracious wilt thou be when judgments come upon thee! Then thou wilt humble thyself before God, and promise amendment. When they are overthrown in stony places, thou wilt be glad to hear their feet fail, which run so fast thou wouldest not hear, Ps. cxli. 6. Then thou wilt endeavour to make thyself acceptable with that God whom, before, thou madest light of." Note, Many have their pangs of piety, who, when the pangs are over, show that they have no true piety. Some give another sense of it; "What will all thy pangs, and state, and wealth avail thee! What will be thy rest? or what comfort shall then have of it, when thou shalt be in these distresses? No more than a woman in travail, full of pains and tears, can take comfort in her ornaments while she is in that condition.” So Mr. Gataker. Note, Those that are proud of their worldly advantages, would do well to consider how they will look when pangs come upon them, and how they will then have lost all their beauty.

4. Here is a prophecy of the disarray of the king; his name was Jeconiah, but he is here once and again called Coniah, in contempt. The prophet shortens his name, and gives him, as we say, a nickname, perhaps to denote that he should be despised of his dignity, that his reign should be shortened, and the number of his months cut off in the midst. Two instances of dishonour are here put upon him.

1. He should be driven hence into captivity, and should spend and end his days in bondage. He was born to a crown, but it should quickly fall from his head, and he should exchange it for fetters. Observe the steps of this judgment.

(1.) God will abandon him, v. 24. The God of truth says it, and confirms it with an oath; "Though he were the signet upon my right hand, (his predecessors had been so, and he might have been so, as he had never done well; but now, as he is degenerated,) I will pluck him thence." The good kings of Judah had been as signets on God's right hand, near and dear to him; he had gloried in them, and made use of them as instruments of his government, as the prince does of his signet-ring, or sign-manual: but Coniah has made himself utterly unworthy of the honour, and therefore the privilege is taken away. This is a sign, that he shall be taken away. Unanswerable to this threatening against Jeconiah is God's promise to Zerubbabel, when he made him his people's guide in their return out of captivity; (Hag. ii. 23.) I will take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, and make thee as a signet. Those that think themselves as signets on God's right hand, must not be secure, but fear lest they be plucked thence.
(2) The king of Babylon shall seize him. Those knew not what enemies and mischief they be exposed to, nor what a place out of God's protection, v. 25. The Chaldeans are here said to be such as had a spate to Comiah, they sought his life; no less than that, they thought, would satisfy their rage; they were such as he had a dread of. (They are those whose face then forgot,) which would make it the more terrible to him to fall into their hands, especially when they thought himself that gave him into their hands. And if God deliver to them, who can deliver him from them?

(3) He and his family shall be carried to Babylon, where they shall wear out the many tedious years of their lives in a miserable captivity; he and his mother, (v. 26.) he and his seed, (v. 28.) he and all the royal family, (for he had no children of his own which he went into Egypt,) or he and the sons of his house; they shall all be cast out to another country, to a strange country, a country where they were not born, nor such a country as that where they were born, a land which they knew not, in which they have no acquaintance with whom to converse, or from whom to expect any kindness. Thither they shall be carried, from a land where their forefathers did live better, from a land where they shall be compelled to servitude. Have they any hopes of seeing their own country again? No, To the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return, v. 27. They conducted themselves ill in it, when they were in it, and therefore they shall never see it more. Jehoiachin was carried to Egypt, the land of the south, (v. 10.) Jeconiah to Babylon, the land of the north, both for remote, the quire contrary way which must either expect to meet again, nor either of them to breathe their native air again. Those that had abused the dominion they had over others, were justly brought thus under the dominion of others. Those that had indulged and gratified their sinful desires, by their oppression, luxury, and cruelty, were justly denied the gratification of their own, and content to see their own in their own native country again. We may observe something very emphatical in that part of this threatening, (v. 26.) In the country where ye were not born, there shall ye die. As there is a time to be born, and a time to die, so there is a place to be born in, and a place to die in. We know where we were born, but where we shall die we know not; it is enough that God knows it, and it is for that we die in Christ, and then it will be well with us whenever we die, though it should be in a far country.

(4) This shall render him very mean and desplicable in the eyes of all his neighbors. They shall be ready to say, (v. 28.) "Is this Comiah a despicable, broken idol? Yes, certainly he is, and much despised from what he was." [1] Time was when he was exalted, may, what he was most despised. This people, who, when his father lately despised, were ready to adore him when they saw him upon the throne; but now he is a despised, broken idol, which, when it was whole, was worshipped, but, when it is rotten and broken, is thrown by and despised, and nobody regards it, or remembers what it has been. Note, What is idolized will, first or last, be despised and broken; what is unwise and ill honored, will, when it is contemned and rivals with God be the scorn of man. Whatever we idolize we shall be disappointed in, and shall despise.

[2] Time was, when he was delighted in; but now he is a vessel in which no pleasure, or to which there is no desire, either because grown out of fashion, or because cracked or dirtied, and so rendered unserviceable. Those that God has no pleasure in, will, some time or other, be so mortified, that men will have no pleasure in them.

He shall leave no posterity to inherit his home. The prediction of this is ushered in with a solemn preface, (v. 29.) Of earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord. Let all the inhabitants of the world take notice of these judgments of God upon a nation and a family that had been near and dear to him, and hence infer that God is impartial in the administration of justice. Or, it is an appeal to the earth itself, on which we tread, since those that dwell on earth are so dear and careless, like the child that makes his speech on the earth, (Isa. 1. 15.) "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, to the words of the Lord." God's words are to be heard; the earth itself will be made to hear it, and yield to it, when it, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Or, it is a call to men that mind earthly things, that are swallowed up in those things, and are inordinate in the pursuit of them; such must needs to be called upon again and again, and a third time, to hear the word of the Lord. Or, it is a call to men, considered as mortal, of the earth, and hastening to the earth again; we all are so, earth we are, dust we are, and, in consideration of that, are concerned to hear and regard the word of the Lord, that, though we are earth, we may be found among those whose names are written in heaven.

Now that which is here to be taken notice of, is that Jeconiah is written childless, (v. 30.) that is, as it follows, No man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David. In him the line of David was extinct as a royal line. Some think that he had children born in Babylon, because mention is made of his seed being cast out there, (v. 28.) and that they died before him. We read in the genealogy, (I. Chron. xxiii.) and in the narrative of seven sons of Jeconiah, (a sad and sorrowful story,) that Jeconiah begat Salathiel, no more is meant than that he bequeathed to him what claims and pretensions he had to the government; the rather, because Salathiel is called the son of Zeruiah, (Luke iii. 27.) of the house of Nathan, v. 31. Whether he had begotten, or only adopted, thus far he was childless, that none of his seed ruled as kings in Judah. He was the Augustus of that empire, in whom it determined. Whoever are childless, it is God that writes them so; and those who take no care to do good in their days, cannot expect to prosper in their days.

CHAP. XXIII.

In this chapter, the prophet, in God's name, is dealing his reproves and threatenings, 1. Among the careless princes, or pastors of the people; (v. 1, 2.) yet promising to take care of the flock, which they had been wanting in, in the day of, v. 3, 8, 9. II. Among the wicked prophets and priests, whose bad character is here given at large in divers instances, especially their imposing upon the people with their pretended inspirations, at which the prophet is astonished, and for which they must expect to be punished, v. 9, 22. III. Among the worldly profane people, who ridiculed God's prophets, and bantered them, v. 33, 40. When all have thus corrupted their way, they must all expect to be told faithfully of it.

1. Who be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord. 2. Therefore saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people, Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord. 3. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring
them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. 4. And I will set up shepherds over them, which shall feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord. 5. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. 6. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. 7. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; 8. But, The Lord liveth, which brought up, and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

Here is,

I. A word of terror to the negligent shepherds; the day is at hand when God will reckon with them concerning the trust and charge committed to them; 9. Be to the pastors, to the rulers, both in church and state, to be watchful as fathers, as masters of the flock, as shepherds to lead them, feed them, protect them, and take care of them. They are not owners of the sheep; God here calls them the shepherds of my pasture, whom I am interested in, and have provided good pasture for. 10. Wo be to those therefore who are commanded to feed God's people, and pretend to do it; but who, instead of that, scatter the flock, and drive them away, by their violence and oppression, and have not visited them, nor taken any care for their welfare, nor concerned themselves at all to do them good. In not visiting them, and doing their duty to them, they did in effect scatter them, and drive them away. 11. The beasts of prey scattered them, and the shepherds are in the fault, who should have kept them together. 12. To the latter, when God will visit upon them the evil of their doings, and deal with them as they deserve. They would not visit the flock in a way of duty, and therefore God will visit them in a way of vengeance.

II. Here is a word of comfort to the neglected sheep. Though the under-shepherds take no care of them, no pains with them, but betray them, the chief Shepherd will look after them; 13. When my Father's house is opened, then shall the sons of the prophets prophesy. 14. He that hath set his affection on the things which are above, as the angels do, shall be as they are. 15. The dispersed Jews shall at length return to their own land, where they shall settle, and there shall possess a good government, v. 3, 4. Though there be a remnant of God's flock left, a little remnant, that has narrowly escaped destruction, he will gather that remnant; will find them out wherever they are, and find out ways and means to bring them back out of all countries whither he had driven them. It was the justice of God, for the sin of their shepherds, that dispersed them; but the mercy of God shall gather in the sheep, when the shepherds that betrayed them are cut off. They shall be brought to their former habitations, as sheep to their folds, and there they shall be fruitful, and increase in numbers. And though their former shepherds took no care of them, it does not therefore follow that they shall have no more. If some have abused a sacred office, that is no good reason why it should be abolished; 16. They destroyed the sheep, but I will set shepherds over them, which shall feed them, saith the Lord. Formerly, they were continually exposed and disturbed with some alarm or other; but now they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed; they shall be in no danger from without, in no fright from within. Formerly, some or other of them were ever and anon picked up by the beasts of prey; but now none of them shall be lacking, none of them missing. Though the times may have been long abased with the church, it does not follow, that they shall be so. Such pastors as Zerubbabel and Nehemiah were, though they lived not in the pomp that Jehoiakim and Jeconiah did, nor made such a figure, were as great blessings to the people as the others were plagues to them. The church's peace is not bound up in the pomp of her rulers.

17. Messiah is here prayed for, that great and good Shepherd of the sheep, shall in the latter days be raised up to bless his church, and to be the Glory of his people Israel, v. 5, 6. The house of David seemed to be quite sunk and ruined by that threatening against Jeconiah, (ch. xxii. 30.) that none of his seed should ever sit upon the throne of David; but here is a promise which effectually secures the honour of the covenant made with David notwithstanding; for by the house will be raised out of its ruins to a greater lustre than ever, and shine brighter far than it did in Solomon himself. We have not so many prophecies of Christ in this book as we had in that of the prophet Isaiah; but here we have one, and a very illustrious one; of him doubtless the prophet here speaks, of him, and of no other man. The first words intimate, that it would be long ere this promise should have its accomplishment; The days come, but they are not yet; I shall see him, but not now; but all the rest intimate that the accomplishment of them will be glorious.

1. Christ is here spoken of as a Branch from David, the Man the Branch; (Zech. iii. 8.) his appearance mean, his beginnings small, like those of a bud or sprout, and his rise seemingly cut off from the earth, but growing to be green, to be great, to be enhanced with glory, to be spread abroad, and to flourish even when it seemed to be a root in a dry ground, buried, and not likely to revive. Christ is the Root and Offspring of David, Rev. xxi. 16. In him doth the horn of David bud, Ps. cxxiii. 17, 18. He is a Branch of God's raising up; he sanctified him, and sent him into the world, gave him his commission and qualifications. He is a righteous Branch, like David's father; he is right, is just, is blameless, and many, even all that are his, are made righteous; as an Advocate, he is Jesus Christ the righteous.

2. He is here spoken of as his church's King. This Branch shall be raised as high as the throne of his father David, and there shall reign and prosper, not as the kings that now were of the house of David, who went backward in all their affairs; no, but forward in all the things that pertain to their religion; those being victorious over all opposition. In the chariot of the everlasting gospel he shall go forth, he shall go on conquering and to conquer. If God raise him up, he will prosper him, for he will own the work of his own hands; what is the good pleasure of the Lord, shall prosper in the hands of those to whom it is committed. He shall prosper, for he shall execute judgment and justice in the earth, all the world over, Ps. cxxi. 12. The present kings of the
rhouse of David were unjust and oppressive, and therefore it is no wonder that they did not prosper; but Christ shall, by his gospel, break the usurped power of Satan, institute a perfect rule of holy living, and, as far as it prevails, make all the world righteous. The effect of this shall be a holy society, the purity and serenity of mind in all his faithful, loyal subjects. In his days, under his dominion, Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; all the spiritual seed of believing Abraham and praying Jacob shall be protected from the curse of heaven and the malice of hell; shall be privileged from the arrests of God's law, and delivered from the attention of the devil. He shall be free from the guilt and dominion of it, and then shall dwell safely, and be quiet from the fear of all evil. See Luke i. 74, 75. Those that shall be saved hereafter from the wrath to come, may dwell safely now; for if God be for us, who can be against us? In the days of Christ's government in the soul, when he is uppermost there, the soul dwells at ease.

(3.) He is here spoken of as The Lord our Righteousness. Observe, [1.] Who and what he is. As God, he is Jehovah, the incomunicable name of God, denoting his eternity and self-existence. As Mediator, he is our Righteousness; by making satisfaction to the justice of God for the sin of man, he has brought in an everlasting righteousness, and so made it over to us in the covenant of grace, that, upon our believing, coming to God by covenant, he becomes our righteousness. His name Jehovah our Righteousness implies that he is so our Righteousness, as no creature could be. He is a sovereign, all-sufficient, eternal Righteousness. All our righteousness has its being from him, and by him it subsists, and we are made the righteousness of God in him. [2.] The profession and declaration of this; This is the name whereby he shall be called, not only he shall be so, but he shall be known to be so. God shall call him by this name, for he shall appoint him to be our Righteousness. By this name Israel shall call him, every true believer shall call him, and call upon him. That is our righteousness, by which, as an allowed plea, we are justified before God, acquitted from guilt, and accepted into favour; and nothing else have we to plead but this, Christ has died, yea, rather is risen again; and we have taken him for our Lord.

3. This great salvation, which will come to the Jews in the latter days of their state, after their return out of Babylon, shall be so illustrious as far to outshine the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt; (v. 7, 8.) They shall no more say, The Lord liveth, that brought us out of Egypt; but, The Lord livest, that brought them up out of the north. This was said before, ch. xvi. 14, 15. But here it seems to point more plainly than it did there to the days of the Messiah, and to compare not so much the two deliverances themselves, giving the preference to the latter, as the two states to which the church by degrees grew after these deliverances. Observe the proportion: Just 480 years after they were come out of Egypt, Solomon's temple was built, (1 Kings vi. 1.) and at that time that nation, which was so wonderfully brought up out of Egypt, was gradually arrived to its height, to its zenith. Just 490 years (70 weeks) after they came out of Babylon, Messiah the Prince set up the gospel-temple, which was the greatest glory of that nation that was so wonderfully brought out of Babylon; see Dan. ix. 24, 25. Now the spiritual glory of the second part of that nation, especially as transferred to the gospel-church, is much more admirable and illustrious than all the temporal glory of the first part of it in the days of Solomon; for that was no glory, compared with the glory which excelleth.

9. My heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake: I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the Lord, and because of the words of his holiness. 10. For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth, the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right. 11. For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord. 12. Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness; they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the Lord. 13. And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err. 14. I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem a horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evil-doers, that none doth return from his wickedness; they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. 15. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets, Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land. 16. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you; they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. 17. They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you. 18. For who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it? 19. Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. 20. The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed, the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly. 21. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. 22. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. 23. Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? 24. Can any hide
himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord. 25. I have heard what the prophets said, that prophecy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. 26. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophecy lies! yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart: 27. Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams, which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. 28. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. 29. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? 30. Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my word, every one from his neighbour. 31. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. 32. Behold, I am against them that prophecy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord.

Here is a long lesson for the false prophets. As none were more bitter and spiteful against God's true prophets than they, so there were none on whom the true prophets were more severe, and justly. The prophet had complained to God of those false prophets, (ch. xiv. 13.) and had often foretold that they should be involved in the common ruin; but here they have woes of their own. Jeremiah was a man that laid things much to heart, and what was any way threatening to his country, made a deep impression upon his spirits. He is here in trouble. 1. Because of the prophets, and their sin, the false doctrine they preached, the wicked lives they lived; especially it filled him with horror, to hear them making use of God's name, and pretending to have their instructions from him. 2. Because of the Lord, and his judgments, which by this means are brought in upon us like a deluge. He trembled to think of the ruin and desolation which were coming from the face of the Lord, (so the word is,) and from the face of the word of his holiness, which will be inflicted by the power of God's wrath, according to the threatenings of his word, confirmed by his holiness. Note, Even those that have God for them, cannot but tremble to think of the misery of those that have God against them.

II. He laments the abounding abominable wickedness of the land, and the present tokens of God's displeasure they were under for it. (v. 10.) The land is full of adulterers, it is full both of spiritual and corporal whoredom; they go a whoring from God, and, having cast off the fear of him, no marvel that they abandon themselves to all manner of lewdness; and having dishonoured themselves and their own bodies, they dishonour God and his name by rash and false swearing, because of which the land lamenteth. Both the public and common swearing are sins, for which a kingdom must be destroyed, if they go on in transgression, or it will be made to mourn under the judgments of God. Their land mourned now under the judgment of famine, the pleasant places, or, rather, the features, or, as some read it, the habitations of the wilderness, are dried up for want of rain, and yet we see no signs of repentance; they answer not the end of the correction; the tenour and tendency of their conversation was opposite, they continued their sins evil, as bad as ever, and they will not be diverted from it. They have a great deal of resolution, but it is turned the wrong way, they are zealously affected, but not in a good thing; their force is not right; their heart is fully set in them to do evil, and they are not valiant for the truth, have not courage enough to break off their evil courses, though they see God thus justly dealing with them.

III. He charges it all upon the prophets and priests, especially the prophets. They are both profane; (v. 11.) the priests profane the ordinances of God they pretend to administer, the prophets profane the word of God they pretend to deliver; their converse and all their conversation are profane, and then it is not strange that the people are so debauched. They both play the hypocrite; or as some read it, they render sacred pretensions they carry on the vilest designs; yea, not only in their own houses, and the bad houses they frequent, but in my house have I found their wickedness; in the temple, where the priests ministered, where the prophets prophesied, there were they guilty both of idolatry and immorality. See a woful instance in Hophni and Phinehas, 1 Sam. ii. 22. God searches his treasures, as well as his temples, and findeth a man, and he is cast out; and the nearer it is to him, the more offensive it is. Two things are charged upon them: 1. That they taught people to sin by their examples. He compares them with the prophets of Samaria, the head city of the kingdom of the ten tribes, which had been long since laid waste. It was the folly of the prophets of Samaria, that their prophesied in Baal, in Baal's name; so Ahab's prophets did, and so they caused my people, Israel, to err, to forsake the service of the true God, and to worship Baal. v. 13. Now the prophets of Jerusalem did not so, they prophesied in the name of the true God, and valued themselves upon that, that they were not like the prophets of Samaria, who prophesied in Baal; but what the better, when they debouched the nation as much by their immoralities as the others. It is a terrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem, that they make use of the name of the holy God, and yet wallow in all manner of impurity! they make nothing of committing adultery, they make use of the name of the God of truth, and yet walk in lies, they not only prophesy lies, but in their common conversation one cannot believe a word they say. It is well either to contend with, the laziness and delusion, or the deceit and hypocrisy of their prophesies, but as for them, it will only end in the doom of the land; Thus they encourage sinners to go on in their wicked ways; for every one will say, Surely we may do as the prophets do; who can expect that we
should be better than our teachers." By this means it is, that none returns from his wickedness; but they all say that they shall have peace, though they go on, for their prophets tell them so. By this means Judah and Jerusalem are become as Sodom and Gomorrah, that were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly; and God looked upon them, and said, Ye are consumed, ye shall be consumed. They were, as they were, with fire and brimstone.

2. That they encouraged people in [by their] false prophesies. They made themselves believe that there was no harm, no danger in sin, and practised accordingly; and then no marvel that they made others believe so too, v. 16. They speak a vision of their own heart; it is the product of their own mind, and is a counterfeit of a revelation, but it is not out of the mouth of the Lord; he never dictated it to them, nor does it agree either with the law of Moses, or with what God has spoken by other prophets. They tell sinners that it shall be well with them, though they persist in their sins, v. 17. See here who they are that they encourage; those that despise God, that slight his authority, and have low and mean thoughts of his institutions, and those that walk after the imagination of their own heart, that are worshippers of idols, and slaves to their own lusts; those that are devoted to their pleasures, put contempt upon their God. Yet see how these prophets caressed and flattered them; they should have been still saying, There is no peace to them that go on in their evil ways; Those that shall have peace, though they go on. Wo, and a thousand woes, to them; but they still said, Ye shall have peace, no evil shall come upon you. And, which was worst of all, they told them, God has said so; so making him to patronise sin, and to contradict himself. Note, Those that are resolved to go on in their evil ways, will justly be given up to believe the strong delusions of those who tell them that they shall have peace, though they go on. They said to sinners, You shall have peace. But v. 18. "Who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, and seen the light of the everlasting? Who of you has, that are so confident of this? You deliver this message, with a great deal of assurance; but have you consulted God about it? No, you never considered whether it be agreeable to the discoveries God has made of himself, whether it will consist with the honour of his holiness and justice, to let sinners go unpunished. You have not perceived and heard his word, nor marked that, you have not compared this with the scriptures of truth. You talk of a translation, or a vision of the heart, but have never considered or attended to the common notice of that, and of the constant tenour of it, you would never have delivered such a message." The prophets themselves must try the spirits by the touchstone of the law and of the testimony, as well as to them whom they prophesy; but which of those did so, that prophesied of peace? That they did not stand in God's counsel nor hear his word, is proved afterward, v. 22. If they had stood in my counsel, as they pretend, I. They would have made the scriptures their standard; They would have caused my people to hear my words, and would have conscientiously kept close to them. But, not speaking according to that rule, it is a plain evidence that there is no light in them. 2. They would have made the conversion of souls their business, and would have aimed at that in all their preaching; they would have done all they could to turn people from their evil way in general, from all the particular evil of their doings. They would have encouraged and assisted, the reformation of manners, that they should have altered and reformed their sins in all their preaching, to part between them and their sins; but it appeared that this was a thing they never aimed at, but, on the contrary, to encourage sinners in their sins. 5. They would have had some seals of their ministry. This sense our translation gives it; If they had stood in my counsel, and the words they had prophesied had been my words, then they should have had men's ears to hear what they had said. A divine power should have gone along with their ministry; and this is for the conviction of sinners; God will bless his own institutions. Yet this is no certain rule; Jeremiah himself, though God sent him, prevailed with but few to turn from their evil way.

V. God threatens to punish these prophets for their wickedness. They promised the people peace; to show them the folly of that, God tells them that they should have no peace themselves. They have been very unfit to warrant the people, and pass their word to them, that no evil shall come upon them, when all evil is coming upon themselves, and they are not aware of it, v. 12. Because the prophets and priests are profane, therefore their ways shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness. They shall sink in them, and lose their footing; they mislead them, and know they do so, they shall themselves have no comfort in their way. 1. They pretend to show others the way, but they shall themselves be in the dark, or in a mist; their light or sight shall fail, so that they shall not be able to look before them, shall have no forecast for themselves. 2. They pretend to give assurances to others, but they themselves shall find no firm footing; Their ways shall be unto them as slippery ways, in which they shall not go with any steadiness, safety, or satisfaction. 3. They pretend to make the people easy with their flatteries, but they shall themselves be uneasy: They shall be driven, forced forward as captives, or making their escape as those that are pursued, and they shall fail in the way by which they thought to escape. 4. They pretend to prevent the evils that threatens others, but God will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, the time fixed for calling them to an account; such a time is fixed concerning all that do not judge themselves, and it will be an evil time. The year of visitation is the year of recompenses. It is further threatened, (v. 15,) God will feed them with wormwood, or poison, with that which is not only nauseous, but noxious, and make them drink waters of gall, or, as some read it, juice of hemlock; see ch. ix. 15. Justly is the cup of trembling put into their hand first, from the prophets of Jerusalem, who should have been patterns of piety and every thing that is praise-worthy, even from them to profaneness gone forth into the land; he that begins to deal thus, shall stand, and not theirs. God's word will make you scrib, but they make you vain, feed you with vain hopes, which will fail you at last. They tell you, No evil shall come upon you, but hear what God says, (v. 19.) Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is
gone forth in fury: they tell you, All shall be calm and serene: but God tells you, There is a storm coming, a whirlwind of the Lord, of his sending, and therefore there is no standing before it; it is a whirlwind raised by divine wrath; it is gone forth in fury, a wind that is brought forth out of the treasures of divine vengeance, and therefore it is a grievous and divine wind, which shall strike upon the head of the wicked, which they cannot avoid, nor find any shelter from. It shall fall upon the wicked prophets themselves who deceived the people, and the wicked people who suffered themselves to be deceived. A terrible tempest shall be the portion of their end, Ps. xi. 11. This sentence is bound on as inviolable: (v. 20.) The anger of the Lord is gone forth, and it will not return again, for God will not alter his mind, nor suffer his anger to be turned away, till he have executed the sentence, and performed the thoughts of his heart. God's whirlwind, when it comes down from heaven, returns not thither, but accomplishes that for which he sent it, Isa. lv. 11. This they will not consider now; But in the latter days he shall consider it perfectly, consider it with understanding, (so the word is here rendered,) and shall judge the nations, and all the works thereof, not fear the threatenings, shall feel the execution of them, and will then perfectly understand what they will not now admit the evidence of, what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of a just and jealous God. They that will not consider in time, will be made to consider when it is too late. Son, remember.

7. Divers things are here offered to the consideration of these false prophets for two considerations, that, if possible, they might be brought to recant their error, and acknowledge the cheat they had put upon God's people.

1. Let them consider, that though they may impose upon men, God is too wise to be imposed upon. Men cannot see through their fallacies, but God can, and does. Here,

(1.) God asserts his own omnipresence and omniscience in general, v. 23, 24. When they told the people that no evil should befall them though they went on in their evil ways, they went upon atheistical principles, that the Lord doth not see their sin, that he cannot judge through the dark cloud, that he will not require it; and therefore they must be taught the first principles of their religion, and confronted with the most incontestable, self-evident truths. God's throne is prepared, in the heavens, and this earth seems to be at a distance from him, yet he is a God here in this lower world, which seems to be afar off, as well as in the upper world, which seems to be at hand, v. 23.
The eye of God is the same on earth that it is in heaven; here it runs to and fro as well as there; (2 Chron. xvi. 9.) and what is in the minds of men, whose spirits are veiled in flesh, is as clearly seen by him, as what is in the mind of angels, those inviolate spirits above, that surround his throne. The power of God is the same on earth among its inhabitants that it is in heaven among his armies. With us, nearness and distance make a great difference both in our observations and in our operations, but it is not so with God; to him darkness and light, at hand, and afar off, are both alike, (v. 23.) Thus he takes omniscience and omnipresence into his hands to distinguish themselves and their own characters and counsels, they cannot possibly be concealed from God's all-seeing eye; (v. 24.) "Can any hide himself in the secret places of the earth, that I shall not see him? Can any hide his projects and intentions in the secret places of the heart, that I shall not see them?" No arts of concealment can hide from the eye of God, nor deceive his judgment of them. (v. 25.) That he is everywhere present; he does not only rule heaven and earth, and uphold both by his universal providence, but he fills heaven and earth by his essential presence, Ps. cxlviii. 7, 8, &c. No place can either include him, or exclude him.

(2.) He applies this to these prophets, who had a notable art of disguising themselves; (v. 25, 26.) I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name. They thought that he was so well acquainted with the world, that he had no leisure to take cognizance of what passed in this, But God will make them know that he knows all their impostures, all the shamms they have put upon the world, under colour of divine revelation. What they intended to humour the people with, they pretended to have had from God in a dream, when there was no such thing. This they could not discover; if a man tell me that he dreamed so and so, I cannot contradict him, because God discovered the fraud. Perhaps the false prophets whispered what they had to say in the ears of such as were their confidants, saying, So and so I have dreamed; but God overheard them. The heart-searching eye of God traced them in all the methods they took to deceive the people, and he cries out, How long? Shall I always bear with them? Is it for purposes of truth? (So must I read it) to be ever prophesying lies, and prophesying the deceits of their own hearts? Will they never see what an affront they put upon God, what an abuse they put upon the people, and what judgments they are preparing for themselves?

2. Let them consider that their palming upon people counterfeit revelations, and laying their own errors upon divine inspiration, was the real God's way to bring all religion into contempt, and make men turn atheists and infidels; and this was the thing they really intended, though they frequently made mention of the name of God, and prefaced all they said with, Thus saith the Lord. Yet, says God, They think to cause my people to forget my name, by their dreams. They designed to draw people off from the worship of God, from all regard to God's laws and ordinances, and the true prophets, as their fathers forgot God's name for Baal. Note, The great thing Satan aims at, is, to make people forget God, and all that whereby he has made himself known; and he has many subtle methods to bring them to this; sometimes he does it by setting up false gods; (bring men in love with Baal, and they soon forget the name of God;) sometimes by misrepresenting the true God, and making his name such a one as ourselves. Pretences to new revelation may prove as dangerous to religion as the denying of all revelation; and false prophets in God's name may perhaps do more mischief to the power of godliness than false prophets in Baal's name, as being less guarded against.

3. Let them consider what a vast difference there was between their prophecies and those that were delivered by the true prophets of the Lord; (v. 26.) The prophet that has a dream, which was the way of inspiration that the false prophets most pretended to, if he has a dream, let him tell it as a dream; so Mr. Gataker reads it. "Let him lay no more stress upon it than men do upon their dreams, nor expect any more regard to be had to it; let them not say that it was not a dream, nor call their foolish dreams divine oracles; but let the true prophet, that has my word, speak my word faithfully, speak it as a truth;" (so some read it) "let him keep close to his instructions, and you will soon perceive a vast difference between the dreams that the false prophets tell, and the divine dictates which the true prophets deliver; he that pretends to have a message from God, let him declare it, and it will easily appear which is of God, and which is not. Those that have spiritual senses exercised will be able to distinguish; for what is the
chaff to the wheat? The promises of peace which these prophets make to you, are no more to be compared to God's promises, than chaff to wheat. Men's fancies are light, and vain, and worthless, as the chaff which the wind drives away. But the work of God is a lasting substance in it; it is food for the soul, the bread of life. Wheat was the staple commodity of Canaan, that valley of vision, Deut. viii. 8. Ezek. xxvii. 17. There is as much difference between the vain fancies of men, and the pure word of God, as between the chaff and the wheat. It follows, (vi. 29.) Is not my word like fire, saith the Lord; is there a man? Has it the power and efficacy, that the word of God has? Nothing like it; there is no more comparison between the painted fire and real fire. Theirs is like an ignis fatuus—a deceiving meteor, leading men into by-paths and dangerous precipices. Note, The word of God is like fire. The law was a fiery law; (Deut. xxxii. 2.) and of the gospel, Christ says, I am come to send fire on the earth, Luke xii. 49. Fire has different effects, according as the matter is on which it works; it hardens clay, but softens wax; it consumes the dross, but purifies the gold; so the word of God is to some a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death. God appeals here to the consciences of those to whom the word was sent: 'Is not my word like fire? Has it not been so to you? Zech. i. 6. Speak what ye have heard. It is compared to fire, to the hammer breaking in pieces. The unhumbled heart of man is like a rock; if it will not be melted by the word of God as the fire, it will be broken in pieces by it as the hammer. Whatever opposition is given to the word, it will be borne down and broken to pieces.

3. Let them consider that while they went on in this grossness against the truth, they were told this, v. 30, 31, 32. Behold, I am against the prophets. They pretended to be for God, and made use of his name, but were really against him; he looks upon them as they were really, and is against them. How can they be long safe, or at all easy, that have a God of almighty power against them? While these prophets were promising peace to the people, God was proclaiming war against them. They stand indicted by the Lord.

(1.) For robbery; They steal my word every one from his neighbour. Some understand it of that word which the good prophets preached; they stole their sermons, their expressions, and mingled them with their own, as hucksters mingled bad wares with some that are good, to make them venderible. Those that were strangers to the spirit of the true prophets, mimicked their language, picked up some good sayings of theirs, and delivered them to the people as if they had been their own, but with an ill grace; it was not of a piece with the rest of their discourses. The legs of the lame are not equal, so is a parable in the mouth of fools, Prov. xxvi. 7. Others understand it of the word of God as it was received by some corrupted, not that they stole it out of their hearts, as the wicked one in the parable is said to steal the good seed of the word, Matt. xiii. 19. By their insinuations they diminished the authority, and so weakened the efficacy of the word of God upon the minds of those that seemed to be under convictions by it.

(2.) They stand indicted for counterfeiting the holiness of God. He is against them! (v. 31.) because they use their tongues at their pleasure in their discourses to the people, they say what they themselves think fit, and then father it upon God, pretend they had it from him, and say, He saith it. Some read it, They smooth their tongues; they are very complaisant to the people, and say nothing but what is pleasing and plausible; they never reprove them or threaten them, but their words are smoother than butter; thus they gratify themselves with them, and get money by them, and they have the impudence and impiety to make God the Patron of their lies; they say, 'He saith so.' What greater indignity can be done to the God of truth than to load the brows of the father of lies at his door.

(3.) They stand indicted as common cheats; (v. 32.) I am against them, for they prophesy false dreams, pretending that to be a divine inspiration, which is but an invention of their own; this is a horrid fraud; nor will it excuse them to say, Cereat creator—Let the buyer take care of himself, and so figularia sue decet, (dubitavit)—If people will be deceived, let them. No, it is the people's fault that they err, that they take things upon trust, and do not try the spirits; but it is much more their fault, that they cause God's people to err by their lies, and by their lightness, by the flatrtries of their preachings, soothing them up in their sins, and by the looseness and lewdness of their conversation, en couraging them to persist in it.

[1.] God dis owns their having any commission from him; I sent them not, nor commanded them; they are not God's messengers, nor is what they say his message. (2.) He therefore justly denies his blessing with them. Therefore they shall not profit this people at all. All the profit they aim at, is to make them easy; but they shall not so much as do that, for God's providences will at the same time be making them uneasy. They do not profit men, whose message is not as the word of God, is implied as is expressed; they not only do them no good, but do them a great deal of hurt. Note, Those that corrupt the word of God, while they pretend to preach it, are so far from edifying the church, that they do it the greatest mischiefe imaginable.

33. And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the Lord? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden! I will even forsake you, saith the Lord. 34. And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the Lord, I will even punish that man and his house. 35. Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbour, and every one to his brother, What hath the Lord answered? and, What hath the Lord spoken? 36. And the burden of the Lord shall ye mention no more; for every man's word shall be his burden: for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the Lord of hosts our God. 37. Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, What hath the Lord answered thee? and, What hath the Lord spoken? 38. But since ye say, The burden of the Lord; therefore thus saith the Lord, Because you say this word, The burden of the Lord, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, The burden of the Lord; 39. Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence: 40. And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.

The profaneness of the people, with that of the
priests and prophets, is here reproved in a particular instance, which may seem of small moment in comparison of their greater crimes; but profaneness in common discourse, and the debauching of the language of a nation, being a notorious evidence of the prevalence of wickedness in it, we are not to think it strange that this matter was so largely and warmly inquired into before the Lord.

1. The sin here charged upon them is, bantering God's prophets, and the dialect they used, and jesting with sacred things. They asked, What is the burden of the Lord? v. 33. and v. 34. They say, The burden of the Lord, v. 38. This was the word that gave great offence to God, that, whenever they spake of the word of the Lord, they called it, in some derision, The burden of the Lord. (1.) This was a word that the prophets much used, and used it seriously, to show what a weight the word of God was upon their spirits, of what importance it was, and how pressingly it should come upon those that heard it. The words of the false prophets had nothing ponderous in them, but God's words had; those were as chaff, these as wheat. Now the preface scoffers took this word, and made a jest of it, and applied it to themselves and with it, that so, when the prophets used it, they might not make people serious with it. Note, It has been the artifice of Satan, in all ages, to obstruct the efficacy of sacred things by turning them into matter of sport and ridicule; the mocking of God's messengers was the buffling of his messages. (2.) Perhaps this word was caught at and reproached by the scoffers as an impertinent word, new spiced by the prophets, and served by any clodhopper; it was only in this and the last age, that the word of the Lord was called the burden of the Lord, and it could not be found in their lexicons to have that signification. But if men take a liberty, as we see they do, to form new phrases which they think more expressive and significant in other parts of learning, why not in divinity? But especially we must observe it as a rule, that the Spirit of God is not tied to our rules of speaking. (3.) Some think that, because, when the word of the Lord is called a burden, it signifies some word of reproof and threatening, which would lay a load upon the hearers, (yet I know not whether that observation will always hold,) that in using this word, the burden of the Lord, in a contending way, they reflected upon God as always bearing hard upon them, always threatening them; supposing that the word of God a perpetual unkindness to them. They make the word of God a burden to themselves, and then quarrel with the ministers for making a burden to them. Thus the scoffers of the latter days, while they slight heaven and salvation, reproach faithful ministers for preaching hell and damnation. Upon the whole, we may observe, That how light soever men may make of it, the great God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, those who burlesque sacred things, and who, that they may make a jest of scripture-truths and laws, put jests upon scripture-language. In such wit as this I am sure there is no wisdom, and so it will appear at last. Be ye not mockers, lest your hands be made strong. Those that were here guilty of this sin, were some of those who pretended to heal the word of God from the true prophets, some of the priests, who perhaps came to seek occasions against them, on which to ground an information, and some of the people, who had learned of the profane priests and prophets to play with the things of God. The people would not have affronted the prophet and his God thus, if the priests and the prophets, those ringleaders of men, had not shown them the way.

2. When they are reproved for this profane way of speaking, they are directed how to express them selves more decently. We do not find that the prophets are directed to make no more use of this word; we find it used long after this; (Zech. ix. 1. Mal. i. 1. Nah. i. 1. Hab. i. 1.) and we do not find it once used in this sense by Jeremiah either before or after. It is true indeed, that in many cases it is advisable to make no use of such words and things as some have made bad use of, and it may be prudent to avoid such phrases as, through innocent enough, are in danger of being perverted and made stumblingblocks. But here God will have the prophet keep to his rule; (ch. xv. 19.) Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them. Do not thou leave off using this word, but let them leave off abusing it; ye shall not mention the burden of the Lord any more in this sense; for if thou doest otherwise, it is perverting the words of the living God, and making a bad use of them, which is an impious, dangerous thing; for consider, he is the Lord of hosts our God. Note, If we will but look upon God, as we ought to do, in his greatness and goodness, and be but duly sensible of our relation and obligation to him, it may be hoped that we shall not dare to abuse the word of God, nor to make use, as some impudent thing to produce a sense, of what is the living God, the Lord of hosts and our God. How then must they express themselves? He tells them, (v. 37.) Thus shalt thou say unto the prophet, when thou art inquiring of him, What hath the Lord answered thee? And what hath the Lord spoken? And they must say thus, when they inquire of their neighbours, v. 35. Note, We must always speak of the things of God reverently and seriously, and as becomes the oracles of God. It is a commendable practice to inquire after the mind of God, to inquire of our brethren what they have heard, to inquire of our prophets what they have to say from God; but then, to show that we do it for a right end, we must do it after a right manner. Ministers may learn here, when they reprove people for what they say and do amiss, to teach them how to say and do better.

3. Because they would not leave off this bad way of speaking, though they were admonished of it, God threatens them here with utter ruin. They would still say, The burden of the Lord, though God had sent to them to forbid them, v. 38. What little regard have those to the divine authority, that will not be persuaded by it to leave an idle word! To see what that means; and to the words of our Lord, Verily, verily I say unto you, What shall I do for you? the Lord of hosts shall send unto them a fiery jeast, a bitter destruction, and the consumption of the heart and of the soul, so that the burden of the Lord they shall have no heart to mention any more; it will be too heavy to make a jest of. They are as the madman that casts firebrands, arrows, and death, while they pretend to be in sport.

(1.) Those shall be severely reckoned with, that thus invert the words of God, that put a wrong construction on them, and make a bad use of them; and it shall be made to appear that it is a great provocation to God, to mock his messengers; I will even punish that man and his house, whether he be prophet or priest, or one of the common people, it shall be visited upon him, v. 34. Inverting God's word, and ridiculing the preachers of it, are sins that bring ruining judgments upon families, and entail a curse upon a house. Another threatening we have, v. 36. Every man's word shall be his own burthen; the guilt of this sin shall be so heavy upon him, as to sink him into the pit of destruction. God shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves, v. 35. Inverting God's word, and ridiculing the preachers of it, are sins, that bring ruining judgments upon families, and entail a curse upon a house. Another threatening we have, v. 36. Every man's word shall be his own burthen; the guilt of this sin shall be so heavy upon him, as to sink him into the pit of destruction.

(2.) The words of God, though thus perverted, shall be accomplished. Do they ask, What is the burden of the Lord? Let the prophet ask them, What burden do you mean? Is it this? I will even forsake you, v. 35. This is the burden that shall
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be laid and bound upon them, (v. 39. 40.) "Behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, a man remembereth thee no more, and have no thoughts of returning to you. Those are miserable indeed, that are forsaken and forgotten of God; and men's bantering God's judgments will not baffle them. Jerusalem was the city God had taken to himself as a holy city, and then given to them and their fathers; but that shall now be forsaken and forgotten. God had taken them to be a people near to him, but they are made to be the refuge of his reproach. They had been great and honourable among the nations, but now God will bring upon them an everlasting reproach and a perpetual shame; both their sin and their punishment shall be their lasting disgrace. It is here upon record, to their infamy, and will remain so to the world's end. Note, God's word will be magnified and made honourable, when those that mock at it shall be vilified and made contemptible. They that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

CHAP. XXIV.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we had a general pre- diction of the utter ruin of Jerusalem, that it should be forsaken and forgotten; which, whatever effect it had upon others, we have reason to think, made the prophet himself very melancholy. Now, in this chapter, God encourages him, by showing him that though the depositions he had made by universal, yet all were not equally involved in it, but God knew how to distinguish, how to separate, between the precious and the vile. Some were gone into captivity already with the remnant of the land, over whom Jeremiah lamented, but God tells him that it should turn to their good; others yet remained hardened in their sins, against whom Jeremiah had a just indignation; but those, God tells him, should go into captivity, and it should prove to their hurt. To inform the prophet of this, and affect him with it; here is, 1. A vision of two baskets of figs, one very good, and the other very bad, v. 3, 4. 2. The explication of this vision, applying the good and evil figs to two classes of his people, to represent their good, (v. 4. 7.) the bad figs to those that should hereafter be sent into captivity for their hurt, v. 8. 10.

1. THE Lord showed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the Lord, after that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. 2. One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe; and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad. 3. Then said the Lord unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. 4. Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 5. Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah; whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good. 6. For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land; and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. 7. And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart. 8. And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil; surely thus saith the Lord, So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt; 9. And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them. 10. And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers.

This short chapter helps us to put a very comfortable construction upon a great many long ones, by showing us that the same providence which to some is a sorrow of death unto death, may by the grace and blessing of God be made to others a savour of life unto life; and that though God's people were with others in the same calamity, yet that it is not the same to them that it is to others, but is designed for their good, and shall issue in their good; to them it is a correcting rod in the hand of a tender Father, while to others it is an avenging sword in the hand of a righteous Judge.

Observe, 1. The date of this sermon. It was after, a little after, Jeconiah's captivity, v. 1. Jeconiah was himself a despised, broken reed, but with him were carried away some very valuable persons, Ezekiel for one; (ch. i. 2.) many of the princes of Judah then went into captivity; Daniel and his fellow were carried off a little before; of the people only the carpenters and the smiths were forced away, either because the Chaldeans needed some ingenious men of those trades, they had a great plenty of astrologers and star-gazers, but a great scarcity of carpenters and smiths, or because the Jews would severely feel the loss of them, and would, for want of them, be unable to fortify their cities, and furnish themselves with weapons of war. Now, it should seem, there were many good people carried away in that captivity, which the pious prophet laid much to heart, while there were those that triumphed in it, and insulted over those to whose lot it fell to go into captivity. Note, We must not conclude concerning the first and greatest sufferers, that they were the worst and greatest sinners; for perhaps it may appear quite otherwise, as it did here.

2. The vision by which this distinction of the captives was represented to the prophet's mind; He saw two baskets of figs before the temple, and there read a different history of the captivity of the good and bad of God. Perhaps the priests, being remiss in their duty, were not ready to receive them, and dispose of them, according to the law, and therefore Jeremiah sees them standing before the temple. But that which was the significance of the vision, was, that the figs in one basket were extraordinarily good, those in the other basket extremely bad. The children of men are all as the fruits of the first tree, capable of being made serviceable to God and man; (Judg. ix. 11.) but some are as good figs, than which nothing is more pleasant, others as damaged, rotten figs, than which nothing is more nauseous. What creature viler than a wicked man, and what more valuable than a godly man? The good figs were like those that are first ripe, which are most acceptable,
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(Mic. vii. 1) and most prized, when newly come into season. The "bad figs are such as could not be eaten, they were so evil; they could not answer the end of their creation, were neither pleasant, nor good for food; and what then were they good for? If God has condemned the worst of men, hypocrites the rest of any service, they are even like the bad figs, that cannot be eaten, that will not answer any good purpose; if the salt have lost its savour, it is therefor unfit for nothing but the dunghill. Of the persons that are presented to the Lord at the door of his tabernacle, some are sincere, and they are very good; others dissemble with God, and they are very bad; some are the fruit of the best of sinners. Corruptio optimi est pessima—That which is best becomes, when corrupted, the worst.

III. The exposition and application of this vision. God intended by it to raise the dejected spirits of those that were gone into captivity, by assuring them of a happy return, and to humble and awaken the proud and secure spirits of those who continued yet in Jerusalem, by assuring them of a miserable captivity.

1. Here is the moral of the good figs, that were very good, the first ripe; these represented the pious captives, that seemed first ripe for ruin, for they went first into captivity, but should prove first ripe for mercy; and their captivity should help to ripen them; these are pleasing to God, as good figs are to us, and shall be carefully preserved for use. Now on the other side,

1. (1) Those that were already carried into captivity, were the good figs that God would own. This shows, [1.] That we cannot determine of God's love or hatred by all that is before us. When God's judgments are abroad, they are not always the worst that are first seized by them. [2.] That early sufferings sometimes prove for the best to us. The sooner the chisel is corrected, the better effect the correction is likely to have: those that went first into captivity were as the son whom the father loves, and chastises betimes, chastens while there is hope, and it did well; but those that stood behind were like a child long left to himself, who, when afterward corrected, is stubborn, and made worse by it, Lam. iii. 27.

2. (1) Even in this disgraceful, uncomfortable captivity, God intended for their benefit; and we are sure that his intentions are never frustrated: I have sent them out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans. It is God that puts his gold into the furnace, to be tried; his hand is, in an especial manner, to be eyed in the afflictions of good people. The judge orders the malefactor into the hand of an executioner, but the father corrects the child with his own hand.

3. (1) Even this disgraceful, uncomfortable captivity, God intended for their benefit; and we are sure that his intentions are never frustrated: I have sent them into the land of the Chaldeans for their good. It seemed to be every way for their hurt, not only as it was the ruin of their estates, honours, and liberties, parted them from their relations and friends, and put them under the power of the world, enemies and oppressors. But as it sunk their spirits, discouraged their faith, deprived them of the benefit of God's oracles and ordinances, and exposed them to temptations; and yet it was designed for their good, and proved so, in the issue, as to many of them, Out of the eater came forth meat. By their afflictions they were convinced of sin, humbled under the sight of men, and from the world, maligns and oppressors, but as it sunk their spirits, discouraged their faith, deprived them of the benefit of God's oracles and ordinances, and exposed them to temptations; and yet it was designed for their good, and proved so, in the issue, as to many of them. Out of the eater came forth meat. By their afflictions they were convinced of sin, humbled under the sight of men, and from the world, maligns and oppressors.

4. God promises them that he will own them in their captivity; though they seem abandoned, they shall be acknowledged; the scornful relations they left behind will scarcely own them, or their kindness to them, but God says, I will acknowledge them. Note, The Lord knows them that are his, and will own them in all conditions; nakedness and poverty shall not be an obloquy upon them.

5. God assures them of his protection in their trouble, and a glorious deliverance out of it in due time, v. 6. Being sent into captivity for their good, they shall not be lost there; but it shall be with them as it is with gold which the refiner puts into the furnace. [1.] He has his eye upon it while it is there, and it is a careful eye, to see that it sustain no damage; I will set mine eyes upon them for good, to order every thing for the best, that all the circumstances of the affliction may concur to the answering of the great intention of it." [2.] He will be sure to take it out of the furnace again, as soon as the work designed upon it is done; I will bring them again to this land. They were sent abroad for improvement awhile, under a divine discipline: but they shall be fetched back, when they have gone through their trial there, to their Father's house. [3.] He will fashion his gold when he has refined it, will make it a vessel of honour fit for his use: so, when God has brought them back from their trial, he will build them, and make them a habitation for himself, will plant them, and make them a vineyard for himself. Their captivity was necessary to the sweetening of their spirits, and make them fit for his building, to prune up the young trees, and make them fit for his planting.

6. He engages to prepare them for these temporal mercies which he designed for them, by bestowing spiritual mercies upon them, v. 7. It is this that will make their captivity be for their good; this shall be both the improvement of their affliction, and their qualification for deliverance. The deliverance shall be for their good, and not only be capable to be enjoyed, but when it is understood, we may be sure that it will end well. Now that which is promised is, [1.] That they should be better acquainted with God; they shall learn more of God by his providences in Babylon than they had learned by all his oracles and ordinances in Jerusalem; thanks to divine grace, for if that had not wrought mightily upon them in Babylon, they would for ever have been on the back. It is this we are promised, I will give them, not so much a head to know me, as a heart to know me, for the right knowledge of God consists not in notion and speculation, but in the convictions of the practical judgment directing and governing the will and affections. A good understanding have all they that do his commandments, Ps. cx. 10. Where God gives a sincere desire and inclination to know him, he will give that knowledge. It is God himself that gives a heart to know him, else we should perish for ever in our ignorance.

[2.] That they should be entirely converted to God; to his will as their rule, his service as their business, and his glory as their end: They shall return to me with their whole heart. God himself undertakes for them that they shall; and if he is with us, we shall be able to do this. For he has given for those that have a heart to know God aright, will not only turn to him, but turn with their whole heart; for those that are either obstinate in their rebellion, or hypocritical in their religion, may truly be said to be ignorant of God. [3.] That thus they should be again taken into covenant with God, as much to their comfort as ever he was before with his church. God will own them, as formerly, for his people, in the discoveries of himself to them, in his acceptance of their services, and in his gracious appearances on their behalf, and they shall have liberty to own him for their God, in their prayers to him, and their expectations from him. Note, Those that have back-
a hidden from God, if they do in sincerity return to him, are admitted as freely as any to all the privileges and comforts of the everlasting covenant, which is herin well ordered, that every transgression in the covenant does not throw us out of covenant, and that affictions are not only consistent with, but flowing from covenant.

2. Here is the moral of the bad figs. Zedekiah and his princes and partisans yet remain in the land, proud and secure enough, Ezek. xi. 3. Many were led into Egypt for shelter, and they thought they had shifted west for themselves and their own safety, and boasted that though therein they had gone contrary to the command of God, yet they had been prudent for themselves. Now as to these that looked so scornfully upon those that were gone into captivity, it is here threatened,

(1.) That, whereas those who were already carried away were settled in one country, where they had the comfort of another society, though in captivity, these should be dispersed and removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, where they should have no joy one of another.

(2.) That, whereas those were carried away captives for their good, these should be removed into all countries for their hurt. Their afflictions should be so far from humbling them, that they should harden them; not bring them nearer to God, but set them at a greater distance from him.

Yet once more shall the time come when they should have the honour of being owned of God in their troubles, these should have the shame of being abandoned by all mankind: In all places whither I shall drive them, they shall be a reproach and a proverb. "Such a one is as false and proud as a Jew," "Such a one is as poor and miserable as a Jew." All their neighbours shall make a jest of them, and of the calamity brought upon them.

(4.) That, whereas those should return to their own land, these shall be consumed from that land, never to see it more, and it shall be of no avail to them to plead, that it was the land God gave to their fathers, for they had it from God, and he gave it them upon condition of their obedience.

(5.) That, whereas those were reserved for better times, these were only reserved for worse; whereas they are removed, the sword, and famine, and pestilence, shall be sent after them, shall soon overtake them, and, coming with commission so to do, shall overcome them. God has variety of judgments wherewith to persecute those that fly from justice; and those that have escaped one, may expect another, till they are brought to repent and reform.

Doubtless, this prophecy had its accomplishment in the men of that generation: yea, because we read not of any such remarkable difference between those of Jeconiah's captivity and those of Zedekiah's, it is probable that this was a typical reference to the last destruction of the Jews by the Romans, in which those of them that believed were taken care of; but those that continued obstinate in iniquity, were carried off to Babylon for a trench and a curse, and so they remain to this day.

**CHAP. XXV.**

The prophecy of this chapter bears date some time before those prophecies in the chapters next foregoing, for they are not the order of time in which they were delivered. This is dated in the first year of Nebuchadrezzar, that remarkable year when the sword of the Lord began to be drawn and furnished. Here is 1. A review of the prophecies that had been delivered to Judah and Jerusalem for many years past, by Jeremiah himself and other prophets, with the little regard given to them, and the little success of them, v. 1. 7. II. A view of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, by the king of Babylon, for their contempt of God and their continuance in sin, v. 8. 11. To which is annexed a promise of their deliverance out of their captivity in Babylon, after 70 years, v. 12. 19. A prediction of the devastation of divers other nations about, by Nebuchadrezzar, represented by a cup of fury put into Nebuchadrezzar's hand, (v. 13.) and a sword of consuming them, (v. 29. 33.) and a desolation made among the shepherds, and their flocks and pastures; (v. 34. 38.) so that we have here judgment beginning at the house of God, but not ending there.

1. **THE word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; 2. The word which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, 3. From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, (that is the three and twentieth year,) the word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened. 4. And the Lord hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear. 5. They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the Lord hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever; 6. And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt. 7. Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the Lord; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt.

We have here a message from God concerning all the people of Judah, (v. 1.) which Jeremiah delivered, in his name, unto all the people of Judah, v. 2. Note, That which is of universal concern, ought to be of universal cognizance. It is fit that the word which concerns all the people, as the word of God does, the word of the gospel particularly, should be divulged to all in general, and as far as may be, addressed to each in particular. Jeremiah had been sent to the house of the king, (Ech. xxv. 1.) and he took courage to deliver his message there; here he is sent to all the people, and he takes the pains to deliver his message to them, probably when they were all come up to Jerusalem, to worship at some of the solemn feasts; then he had them together, and it was to be hoped then, if ever, they would be well disposed to hear counsel and receive instruction.

This prophecy is dated in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, and the 1st of Nebuchadrezzar. It was in the latter end of Jehoiakim's 3d year, that Nebuchadrezzar began to reign himself alone, (having reigned some time before in conjunction with his father,) as appears, Dan. i. 1. but Jehoiakim's 4th year was the year before Nebuchadrezzar's 1st was completed. Now that that active, daring, martial prince began to set up for the world's master, God, by his prophet, gives notice that he is his servant, and intimates what work he intends to employ him in, that his growing greatness, which was so formidable to the nations, might not be construed as any reflection upon the power and providence of God in the
government of the world. Nebuchadrezzar should not bid so fair for universal monarchy, (I should have said universal tyranny,) but that God had purposes of his own to serve by him; in the execution of which, the world shall see the meaning of God's permitting and ordering a thing that seemed such a reflection on his sovereignty and goodness.

Now in this message we observe the great pains that had been taken with the people to bring them to repentance, which they are here put in mind of, as an aggravation of their sin, and a justification of God in his proceedings against them.

1. Jeremiah, for his part, had been a constant preacher for 23 years; he began in the 13th year of Josiah, who reigned 31 years, so that he prophesied about 18 or 19 years in his reign, then in the reign of Jehohaz, and now 4 years of Jehoiakim's reign. Note, God keeps an account, whether we do or no, how long we have enjoyed the means of grace; and the longer we have enjoyed them, the heavier will our account be if we have not improved them. These three years (these three and twenty years) have I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree. All this while, (1.) God had been constant in sending messages to them, as there was occasion for them; "From that time to this very day, the word of the Lord has come unto me, for your use." Though they had the substance of the warning sent them already in the books of Moses, yet, because they were not duly regarded and applied, God sent to enforce them, and make them more particular, that they might be without excuse. Thus God's Spirit was striving with them, as with the old world, Gen. vi. 3. (2.) Jeremiah had been faithful and industrious in delivering those messages; he could appeal to themselves, as well as to God and his own conscience, concerning this: I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking. He had droped the argument of God; he had taken a great deal of care and pains to discharge his trust in such a manner as might be most likely to win and work upon them. What men are solicitous about and intent upon, they rise up early to prosecute. It intimates that his head was so full of thoughts about it, and his heart so intent upon doing good, that it broke his sleep, and made him get up before he was thought to be about his business. No, he would be most likely to do them good. He rose early, both because he would lose no time, and because he would lay hold on and improve the best time to work upon them, when, if ever, they were sober and sedate. Christ came early in the morning to preach in the temple, and the people as early to hear him, Luke xxii. 38. Morning lectures have their advantages. My voice shall thou hear in the morning.

2. Beside him, God had sent them other prophets, on the same errand. v. 4. Of the writing prophets, Micah, Nahum, and Habakkuk, were a little before him; and Zephaniah contemporary with him. But, beside those, there were many other of God's servants the prophets, who preached awakening sermons, which were never published. See 2 Chron. xxiv. 20. God himself is said to rise early and send them; intimating how much his heart also was upon it, that this people should turn and live, and not go on and die, Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

3. All the messages sent them were to the purpose, and much to the same purpose, v. 5, 6. (1.) They all told them of their faults, their evil way, and the evil of their doing. Those are not of God's sides that do not perceive if there be nothing amiss among them. (2.) They all reproved them particularly for their idolatry, as a sin that was in a special manner provoking to God; their going after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, gods that were the work of their own hands. (3.) They all called on them to repent of their sins, and to reform their lives. This was the burden of every song. Turn ye now every one from his evil way. Note, Personal and particular reformation must be insisted on as necessary to national deliverance; every one must turn from his own evil way. The street will not be clear unless every one sweep before his own door. (4.) They all assured them, that, if they did so, it would certainly be the lengthening out of their transgressions. The mercies they enjoyed should be continued to them; "You shall dwell in the land, dwell at ease, dwell in peace, in this good land, which the Lord has given you and your fathers. Nothing but sin will turn you out of it, and that shall not if you turn from it." The judgments they feared should be prevented; Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt. Note, We should never receive from God the evil of punishment if we did not provoke him by the evil of sin. God deals fairly with us, never corrects his children without cause, nor causes grief to us unless we give offence to him.

4. Yet all was to no purpose. They were not wrought upon to take the right and only method to turn away the wrath of God. Jeremiah was a lively, affectionate preacher, yet they hearkened not to him, v. 3. The other prophets dealt faithfully with them, but neither did they hearken to them, nor incline their ear, v. 4. That very particular sin which they were told of, all others, was most offensive to God, and made them obnoxious to his justice, they willfully persisted in; You provoke me with the works of your hands, to your own hurt. Note, What is a provocation to God will prove, in the end, hurt to ourselves, and we must bear the blame of it. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.

3. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, Because ye have not heard my words. 9. Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and a hissing, and perpetual desolations. 10. Moreover, I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle. 11. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. 13. And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations. 14. For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also; and I will recompense them accord-
ing to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands.

Here is the sentence grounded upon the foregoing charge. "Because ye have not heard my words, I must take another course with you," v. 8. Note, When men will not regard the judgments of God's mouth, they may expect to feel the judgments of his hands; to hear the rod, since they would not hear the word; for the sinner must either be parted from his sin, or perish in it. Wrath comes not but remedy against those that sin against righteousness. It is not so much men's turning aside that ruins them as their not returning.

1. The ruin of the land of Judah by the king of Babylon's armies is here decreed, v. 9. God sent them his servants the prophets, and they were not heeded, and therefore God will send for his servant the king of Babylon, whom they cannot mock, and despise, and persecute, as they did his servants the prophets. Note, The messengers of God's wrath will be sent against those that would not receive the messengers of his mercy. One way or other, God will be heard, and will make men know that he is the Lord. Nebuchadrezzar, though a stranger to the true God, the God of Israel, nay, an enemy to him, and afterward a rival with him, was yet, in the descent he made upon this country, God's servant, and delivered it up to his enemies, and was an instrument in his hand for the correction of his people. He was really serving God's designs when he thought he was serving his own ends. Justly therefore does God here call himself, The Lord of hosts, (v. 8.) for here is an instance of his sovereign dominion, not only over the inhabitants, but over the armies, of this earth, of which he makes use, not by his own pleasure. He has them all at his command; the most potent and absolute monarchs are his servants. Nebuchadrezzar, who is an instrument of his wrath, is as truly his servant, as Cyrus is an instrument of his mercy. The land of Judah being to be made desolate, God here musters his army that is to do it, gathers it together, takes all the families of the north, if there be occasion for them, leads them on as their Commander in chief, brings them against this land, gives them success, not only against Judah and Jerusalem, but against all the nations round about, that there might be no dependence upon them as allies, or assistants against that threatening force. The utter destruction of this and all the neighbouring lands is here foretold. It shall be total; The whole land shall be a desolation, not only the cities, but a desolation itself, both city and country shall be laid waste, and all the wealth of both be made a prey of; it shall be lasting, even perpetual desolations; they shall continue so long in ruins, and after long waiting there shall appear so little prospect of relief, that every one shall call it perpetual. This desolation shall be the means of their credit among the nations, and shall only serve to magnify the dust, shall make them an astonishment and an hissing; every one will be amazed at them, and hiss them off the stage of action with just disgrace, for desiring God who had been their protection, for impostors who would certainly be their destruction. It will likewise be the ruin of all their comfort among themselves; it shall be the end of all hopes they had of recovering the land of their fathers, and the city of their natal birth, hang their harps on the willow trees, and put them out of tune for songs. I will take from them the voice of mirth; they shall neither have cause for it, nor hearts for it. They would not hear the voice of God's word, and therefore the voice of mirth shall no more be heard among them. They shall be deprived of food; the sound of the millstones shall not be heard, for when the enemy has seized their stores, the sound of the grinding must needs be low, Eccl. xii. 4. An end shall be put to all business, there shall not be seen the light of a candle, there shall be no work to be done worth candlelight. And lastly, they shall be deprived of all means of liberty; These nations shall serve the king of Babylon 70 years. The fixing of the time during which the captivity should last, would be of great use, not only for the confirmation of the prophecy, when the event (which in this particular could by no human sagacity be foreseen) should exactly answer the prediction, but for the comfort of the people of God in their case, and for the confirmation of all future work of faith and prayer. Daniel, who was himself a prophet, had an eye to it, Dan. ix. 2. Nay, God himself had an eye to it, (2 Chron. xxxvi. 22.) for therefore he stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, that the word spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished. Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world; which appears by this, that, when he had thought fit, some of them have been made known to his servants the prophets, and by them to his church.

2. The ruin of Babylon, at last, is here likewise foretold, as it had been, long before, by Isaiah, v. 12.—14. The destroyers must themselves be destroyed, and the rod thrown into the fire, when the correcting-work is done with it. This shall be done when 70 years are accomplished, and the captivity of Babylon must make way for the deliverance of the captives. It is a great doubt when these 70 years commence; some date them from the captivity in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, and 1st of Nebuchadrezzar; others from the captivity of Jehoiachin eight years after. I rather incline to the former, because then these nations began to serve the king of Babylon, and because historically God has taken the earliest time from which to reckon the accomplishment of a promise of mercy, as will appear in computing the 400 years' servitude in Egypt. And if so, 18 or 19 years of the 70 were run out before Jerusalem and the temple were quite destroyed in the 11th year of Zedekiah. However that be, when the time, the set time, to favor Zion is come, the king of Babylon must be visited, and all the instances of his tyranny reckoned for; then that nation shall be punished for their iniquity, as the other nations have been punished for theirs. That land must then be a perpetual desolation, such as they had made other lands; for the Judge of all the earth will bo right, and avenge wrong, as King of nations, and King of saints. Let proud conquerors be modest in the height of their power and success, for it will come at last to their own turn to suffer; their day will come to fall. In this destruction of Babylon, which was to be brought about by the Medes and Persians, reference shall be had, (1.) To what God had said; I will bring upon that land all my words; for all the wealth and honour of Babylon shall be sacrificed to the truth of God. The division of the empire shall not be, rather than one iota or title of God's word shall fall to the ground. The same Jeremiah that prophesied the destruction of other nations by the Chaldeans, foretold also the destruction of the Chaldeans themselves; and this must be brought upon them, v. 15. It is with reference to this very event, that God says, I will confirm the word of my servant, and prove the efficacy of his prophecy; I shall not forget the covenant of their fathers, which I made with Abraham, v. 16. (2.) To what they had done; (v. 14.) I will recompense them according to their deeds, by which they transgressed the law of God, even then when they were made to serve his purposes. They had made many nations to serve them, and trampled upon them with the greatest insolence imaginable; but now that the measure of their iniquity is full, many nations and great kings, that are in alliance with,
and come in to the assistance of, Cyrus king of Persia, shall serve themselves of them also, shall make themselves masters of their country, enrich themselves with their spoils, and make them the footstool by which to mount the throne of universal monarchy. They shall make use of them for servants and soldiers. He that leads into captivity, shall go into captivity.

15. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto me, Take the wine-cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations to whom I send thee, to drink it. 16. And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them. 17. Then took I the cup at the Lord's hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the Lord had sent me: 18. To wit, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, a hissing, and a curse; (as it is this day;) 19. Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people; 20. And all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod. 21. Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon, 22. And all the kings of Tyrus, and all the kings of Sidon, and the kings of the islands which are beyond the sea, 23. Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all that are in the utmost corners, 24. And all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mingled people that dwell in the desert, 25. And all the kings of Zimri, and all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes, 26. And all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingsoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth: and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them. 27. Therefore thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Drink ye, and be drunken, and spue, and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you. 28. And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at thy hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Ye shall certainly drink. 29. For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the Lord of hosts.

Under the similitude of a cup going round, which all the company must drink of, is here represented the universal desolation that was now coming upon that part of the world, which Nebuchadrezzar, who just now began to reign and act, was to be the instrument of, and which should at length recoil upon his own country. The cup in the vision is to be a sword in the accomplishment of it: so it is explained, ch. 16. 10. It is the sword that I will send among them, the sword of war, that should be irresistibly strong and implacably cruel. Observe,

1. Whence this destroying sword should come; from the hand of God, it is the sword of the Lord, ch. xlvii. 6.) bathed in heaven, Is. xxxiv. 5. Wicked men are made use of as his sword, Ps. xviii. 8. Therefore 16. It is the wine-cup of his fury. It is the just anger of God that sends this judgment; the nations but provoke him by their sins, and they must fall under the terrors of his wrath. They shall be compounded to some intoxicating liquor, which they shall be forced to drink of, as formerly condemned malefactors were sometimes executed by being compelled to drink poison. The wicked are said to drink the wrath of the Almighty, Job xxi. 20. Rev. xvi. 10. Their share of troubles in this world is represented by the dregs of a cup of red wine full of mixture, Ps. lxxv. 8. See Ps. xi. 6. The wrath of God in this world is but as a cup, in comparison of the full streams of it in the other world.

2. By whose hand it should be sent; by the hand of Jeremiah, as the judge set over the nations, (ch. i. 10.) to pass this sentence upon them; and by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar, as the executioner. What a much greater figure then does the poor prophet make, that the people of God may see! when we look upon their relation to God, though in the eye of the world it was the reverse of it! Jeremiah must take the cup at God's hand, and compel the nations to drink it. He foretells no hurt to them, but what God appoints him to fertilize; and what is foretold by a divine authority, will certainly be fulfilled by a divine power.

3. On whom it should be sent; on all the nations within the empire of Israel's acquaintance, and the lines of their communication. Jeremiah took the cup, and made all nations to drink of it, that is, he prophesied concerning each of the nations here mentioned, that they should share in this great desolation that was coming. Jerusalem and the cities of Judah are put first; (v. 18.) for judgment begins at the house of God, (1 Pet. iv. 17.) at the sanctuary. Ezek. xxv. 5, 6. Pharaoh had his eye principally upon Jerusalem and Judah in this expedition or no, does not appear; probably he had; for it was as considerable as any of the nations here mentioned; however, God had his eye principally to them. And this part of the prophecy was already begun to be accomplished; this is denoted by that melancholy parenthesis, (as it is this day,) for in the 4th year of Jehovah's things were come into a very bad posture, and all the foundations were cut of course. Pharaoh, king of Egypt, comes next, because the Jews trusted to that broken reed; (v. 19.) the remains of them fled to Egypt, and then Jeremiah particularly foretold the destruction of that country, ch. lxxiii. 10. 11. All the other nations that bordered upon Canaan, must pledge Jerusalem in this bitter cup, this cup of trembling. The mingled people, the Arameans, so some; some rovers of divers nations that lived by rapine, so others; the kings of the land of Uz, joined to the country of the Edomites. The Philistines had been vexatious to Israel, but now their cities and their lords became a prey to this mighty conqueror. Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Zidon, are places well known to border upon Israel: the Isles beyond, beside, a little more to be supposed, is Phrygia and Syria, that lay upon the coast of the Mediterranean sea. Dedan, and the other countries mentioned, (v. 23, 24.) seem to have lain upon the confines of Idumea and Arabia the desert. These of Elam are the Persians, with whom the Medes
are joined, now looked upon as incomconsiderable, and yet afterward able to make reprisals upon Babylon for themselves and all their neighbours. *The kings of the north,* that lay nearer to Babylon, and others that lay up at some distance, will be sure to be seized on, and made a prey of, by the victorious sword of Nebuchadrezzar. Nay, he shall push on his victories with such incredible fury and success, that all the nations of the earth, that are otherwise known, should become sacrifices to his ambition. Thus Alexander is said to have conquered the world, and the Roman empire is called the world, Luke ii. 1. Or it may be taken as reading the doom of all the kingdoms of the earth; one time or other they shall feel the dreadful effects of war. The world has been, and will be, a great coxcomb, while Nabuchadrezzar and his wars as they do ill their members, shall, 1st. be their own ruin, and 2d. shall, upon their own heads, bring ruin on others. 

Upon this whole matter we may observe, (1.) That there is a God that judges in the earth, to whom all the nations of the earth are accountable, and by whose judgment they must abide. (2.) That God can easily bring to ruin the greatest nations, the most numerous and powerful, and such as have been most secure. (3.) That those who have been vexatious and mischievous to the people of God, will be reckoned with for it at last. Many of these nations had in their turns given disturbance to Israel, but now comes destruction on them. The year of the Redeemer will come, even the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion. (4.) That the burden of the word of the Lord will at last be fulfilled, as the prophet foretold, Jer. ii. 13 (ch. xiii. &c.) and now at length all his prophecies will have their complete fulfilling. (5.) That those who are ambitious of power and dominion, commonly become the troublers of the earth and the plagues of their generation; Nebuchadrezzar was so proud of his might, that he had no sense of right. These are the men that turned the world upside down, and yet expect to be admired and adored. Alexander thought himself a great prince, when others thought him no better than a great pirate. (6.) That the greatest pomp and power of this world are of very uncertain continuance. Before Nebuchadrezzar's greater force kings themselves must yield, and become captives.

30. Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The Lord shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mighty roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations; he will plead with all flesh: he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground. 34. Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves in the ashes, ye principal of the flock: for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are accomplished; and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel. 35. And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape.
of the shepherds, and a howling of the principal of the flock, shall be heard: for the Lord hath spoiled their pasture. 37. And the peaceable habitations are cut down, because of the fierce anger of the Lord. 38. He hath forsaken his covert, as the lion: for their land is desolate, because of the fierceness of his oppressor, and because of his fierce anger.

We have in these verses, a further description of those terrible desolations which the king of Babylon with his armies should make in all the countries and nations; and it is shown also, how certain it was that God had erected his temple; there were his oracles and ordinances which the neighbouring nations should have attended to, and might have received benefit by; thither they should have applied themselves for the knowledge of God and their duty, and then they might have had reason to bless God for their neighbourhood to Jerusalem; but they, instead of that, took this opportunity either to set on to disturb that holy city, when God came to reckon with Jerusalem, (because it learned so much of the way of the nations,) he reckoned with the nations because they learned so little of the way of Jerusalem.

They will soon be aware of Nebuchadnezzar’s making war upon them; but the prophet is here bidden to tell them that it is God himself that makes war upon them, a God with whom there is no contending.

1. The war is here proclaimed; (v. 50.) The Lord shall roar from on high; not from mount Zion and Jerusalem, (as Joel iii. 16. Amos i. 2.) but from heaven, from his holy habitation there; for now Jerusalem is one of the places against which he roars; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation on earth from that above. He has been longsuffering and seemed not to take notice of the wickedness of the nations; the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now he shall give a shout, as the assailants in battle do, against all the inhabitants of the earth, to whom it shall be a shout of terror, and yet a shout of joy in heaven, as theirs that read the grapes; for when God is reckoning with the proud enemies of his kingdom among men, there is a great voice of much people heard in heaven, saying, Hallelujah. Rev. xiv. 1. He roars as a lion, (Amos iii. 4, 8,) as a lion that has forsaken his covert, (v. 38.) and is going abroad to seek his prey, upon which he roars, that he may the more easily seize it.

2. The manifesto is here published, showing the causes and reasons why God proclaims this war; (v. 31.) The Lord has a controversy with the nations; he has just cause to contend with them, and he will use the ways of dealing with them. His quarrel with them is, in one word, for their wickedness, their contempt of him, and his authority over them, and kindness to them; he will give them that are wicked to the sword. They have provoked God to anger, and thence comes all this destruction; it is because of the fierce anger of the Lord, (v. 37.) and again (v. 58.) the fierceness of the oppressor; or as we rather read, the fierceness of the oppressing sword (for the word is feminine) is because of his fierce anger; and we are sure that he is never angry without cause; but who knows the power of his anger?

3. The alarm is here given and taken; A noise will come even to the ends of the earth, so loud shall it roar, so far shall it reach, v. 31. The alarm is not given by sound of trumpet, or beat of drum, but by a whirlwind, a great whirlwind, storm or tempest, which shall be raised up from the coasts, the remote coasts of the earth, v. 32. The Chaldean army shall be like a hurricane raised in the north, but thence carried on with incredible fierceness and swiftness, bearing down all before it. It is like the whirlwind out of which God answered Job, which was exceeding terrible, Job xxxvii. 1.—xxviii. 1. And when the wrath of God thus roars like a lion from heaven, no marvel if it be consumed, and with much wrath, from earth; for who can choose but tremble when God thus speaks in displeasure? See Hosea xi. 10. Now the shepherds shall howl and cry, the kings and princes, and great ones of the earth, the principal of the flock; they used to be the most courageous and secure, but now their hearts shall fail them, they shall swallow themselves in the dust, v. 34. Seeing they are now uncovered and thrown head against the enemy, and seeing their country, which they have the charge of, and a concern for, inevitably ruined, they shall abandon themselves to sorrow. There shall be a voice of the cry of the shepherds, and a howling of the principal of the flock shall be heard, v. 36. Those are great calamities indeed, that strike such a terror upon the great, the mighty, and the strong; and great consolation; The Lord hath spoiled their pastures, in which they fed their flocks, and out of which they fed themselves; the spoilage of that makes them cry out thus. Perhaps, carrying on the metaphor of a lion roaming, it alludes to the great fright that shepherds are in when they hear a roaring lion coming toward their flocks, and find they have no way to flee (v. 35.) for their own safety, neither can the principal of the flock escape. The enemies of God are so furious, so sedulous, and the extent of their armies so vast, that it will be impossible to avoid falling into their hands. Note, As we cannot outface, so we cannot outrun, the judgments of God. This is that for which the shepherds howl and cry.

4. The progress of this war is here described; (v. 32.) Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation; as the cup goes round, so every nation shall have its share, and take its turn, because one does not take warning by the calamities of another to repent and reform. Nay, as if this were to be a little representation of the last and general judgment, it shall reach from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth, v. 33. The day of vengeance is in his heart, and now his hand shall find out all his enemies wherever they are, Ps. xxi. 8. Note, With our own neighbour’s ease is mingled with the trials of the nations, and if we do not take care, he may often be concerned for our own. When one nation is a seat of war, every neighbouring nation should hear, and fear, and make its peace with God.

5. The dismal consequences of this war are here foretold; The days of slaughter and diversions are accomplished, they are fully come, (v. 34.) the time fixed in the divine counsel for the slaughter of some and the dispersion of the rest, which will make the nations completely desolate. Multitudes shall fall by the sword of the merciless Chaldeans, so that the slain of the Lord shall be every where found; they are slain by commission from him, and are sacrificed to his justice. The slain for sin are the slain of the Lord. To complete the misery of their slaughter, they shall not be lamented in particular, so general shall the number of lamentation be, that they shall not be buried, for they shall have no friends left to do it, and the enemies shall not have so much humanity in them as to do it; and then they shall be as dung upon the earth, so vile and noisome: and it is well if, as dung manures the earth, and makes it fruitful, so these horrid spectacles, which lie as monuments of divine justice, might be a means to awaken the inhabitants of the earth to learn righteousness. The effect of this war will be the desolation of the whole land that is the seat of it, (v. 38.) one land after another. But here are two
expressions more, that seem to make the case in a particular manner piteous. (1.) Ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel, v. 34. The most desirable persons among them who most valued themselves, and were most valued, shall fall by the sword; who were led upon as vessels of honour. Ye shall fall as a Venetian glass or a China dish, which is soon broken all to pieces; even the tender and delicate shall share in the common calamity; the sword devours one as well as another. (2.) Even the peaceable habitations are cut down. Those that used to be quiet, and not molested, the habitations in which ye have long dwelt in peace, shall now be no longer such, but cut down by the war; or, Those who used to be quiet, and not molesting any of their neighbours, those who lived in peace, easily, and gave no provocation to any, shall now be cut down, and escape the frightful and woful effects of war, that spare those who were most harmless and insensible upon hard things. Blessed be God, there is a peaceable habitation above for all the sons of peace, which is out of the reach of fire and sword.

CHAP. XXVI.

As in the history of the Acts of the Apostles, that of their preaching and that of their sufferings are interwoven; so, even in this, we have of that which happened to the prophets, and of that which happened to the apostles. And the fact is, it is in the account we have of the prophet Jeremiah; witness this chapter, where we are told, 1. How faithfully he preached, v. 1. 6. II. How spiritually he was persecuted for so doing by the priests and the prophets, v. 7. 11. III. How bravely he stood to his doctrine, in the face of his persecutors, v. 12. 13. IV. How wonderfully he was protected and delivered by the providence of the princes and elders, v. 16. 19. Though Jeremiah was a jealousy of another prophet, was about the same time put to death by Jehoiakim, (v. 20. 23.) yet Jeremiah met with those that sheltered him, v. 24.

1. In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah king of Judah, came this word from the Lord, saying, 2. Thus saith the Lord. Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them: diminish not a word: 3. If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings. 4. And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord. If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law which I have set before you, 5. To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them, but ye have not hearkened; 6. Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.

We have here the sermon that Jeremiah preached, which gave such offence, that he was in danger of losing his life for it. It is here left upon record, as it were, by way of appeal to the judgment of impartial men in all ages, whether Jeremiah was worthy to die for delivering such a message as this from God, and whether his persecutors were not very wicked and unreasonable men.

2. God directed him where to preach this sermon, and when, and to what auditory, v. 2. Let not even Jeremiah be considered as insinquent in the choice of place and time, nor say that he might have delivered his message more privately, in a corner, among his friends that he could confide in, and that he deserved to smart for not acting more cautiously; for God gave him orders to preach in the court of the Lord's house, which was within the peculiar jurisdiction of his sworn enemies the priests, and who would therefore take themselves to be in a particular manner affronted. He must preach this, as it would seem, at the time of one of the most solemn festivals, when the whole people were come from all the cities of Judah to worship in the Lord's house. These worshippers, we may suppose, had a great veneration for their priests, would credit the character they gave of men, and be exasperated against those whom they defamed, and would, consequently, side with them and strengthen their hands against Jeremiah; but none of these things must move him to the least fear or danger, he would preach this sermon, which, if it were delivered of course, would be very provoking. And because the prophet might be in some temptation to palliate the matter, and make it better to his hearers than God had made it to him, to exchange an offensive expression for one more plausible, therefore God charges him particularly not to diminish a word, but to speak the truth in plain language, and to say the words, that he had commanded him. Note, God's anointed must not keep close to their instructions, and net in the least vary from them, either to please men, or to save themselves from harm. They must neither add nor diminish, Deut. iv. 2.

11. God directed him what to preach, and it is that which could not give offence to any but such as were resolved to go on still in their trespasses.

1. He must assure them that if they would repent of their sins, and turn from them, though they were in imminent danger of ruin, and desolating judgments were just at the door, yet a step should be put to them, and God would proceed no further in his controversy with them; (v. 3.) this was the main thing God intended in sending him to them, to try if they would return from their sins, that so God might turn from his anger, and turn away the judgments that threatened them; which he was not only willing, but very desirous, to do, as soon as he could do it without prejudice to the honour of his justice and holiness. See how God waits to be gracious, waits till we are duly qualified, till we are fit for him to be gracious to, and in the mean time tries a variety of methods to bring us to be so.

2. He must, on the other hand, assure them that if they continued obstinate to all the calls God gave them, and would persist in their disobedience, it would certainly end in the ruin of their city and temple, v. 4—6. (1.) That which God required of them, was, that they should be observant of what he had said to them, both by the written word and by his ministers; that the word he sent them he should write in all his books which he set before them, the law of Moses, with the ordinances and commandments of it; and that they should hearken to the words of his servants the prophets, who pressed nothing upon them but what was agreeable to the law of Moses, which was set before them as a touchstone to try the spirits by: and by this they were distinguished from the false prophets, not that they were free to do as the wind was, but that they should stick to the word of life he set before them. The laws were, that God would set before them. The prophets were his own servants, and were immediately sent by him to them, and sent with a great deal of care and concern, rising early to send them, lest they should come too late, when their prejudices had got possession, and were become invincible. They had hitherto been dealt both to the law and to the prophets; Ye have not hearkened; all he expects now, is, that at length they should heed what he said,
and make his word their rule. A reasonable demand! (2.) That which is threatened in case of refusal, is, that this city, and the temple in it, shall fare as their predecessors did, Shiloh and the tabernacle there, for a like refusal to walk in God's law and hearken to his prophets, then when the present dispensation of prophecy just began in Samuel. Now could a sentence be expressed more exceptionally? Is it not a rule of justice, Parium par sit ratio—Let those whose cases are the same, be dealt with alike? If Jerusalem be like Shiloh in respect of sin, why should it not be like Shiloh in respect of punishment? Can any other be expected? This was not the first time he had given them warning to this effect; see ch. vii. 12—14. When the temple, which was the glory of Jerusalem, was destroyed, the city was thereby made a curse; for the temple was that which made it a blessing. If the salt lose that savour, it is thenceforth good for nothing. It shall be a curse, it shall be the pattern of a curse; if a man would curse any city, he would say, God make it like Jerusalem! Note, Those that will not be subject to the commands of God, make themselves subject to the curse of God.

7. So the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord. 3. Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. 9. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the Lord. 10. When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the Lord, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house. 11. Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes, and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears. 12. Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes, and to all the people, saying, The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house, and against this city, all the words that ye have heard. 13. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. 14. As for me, behold, I am in your hand; do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you: 15. But know ye for certain, that, if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you, to speak all these words in your ears.

One would have hoped that such a sermon as that in the foregoing verses, so plain and practical, so rational and pathetic, and delivered in God's name, should have wrought upon even this people, especially meeting them now at their duties, and should have prevailed with them to repent and reform; but instead of awakening their consciences, it did but excite them to an exasperation, as appears by his account of the effect of it.

I. Jeremiah is charged with it as a crime, that he had preached such a sermon, and is apprehended for it as a criminal. The priests and false prophets, and people, heard him speak these words, v. 7. They had patience, it seems, to hear him out, did not disturb him when he was preaching, nor give him any interruption till he had made an end of speaking a great while, and delivered this sentence; so far they were fairer with him than some of the persecutors of God's ministers have been; they let him say all he had to say, and yet perhaps with a bad design, in hopes to have something worse yet to lay to his charge; but, having no worse, this shall suffice to ground an indictment upon; He hath said, This house shall be like Shiloh. See how unfair they are in representing his words. He had been in God's name. If ye will not hearken to me, then will I make this house like Shiloh; but they leave out God's hand in the desolation, (I will make it so,) and their own hand in it, in not hearkening to the voice of God, and charge it upon him, that he blasphemed this holy place; the crime charged both on our Lord Jesus and on Stephen; He said, This house shall be like Shiloh. Well might he complain, as David doth, (Ps. lix. 1.) But the Lord and I are alikethrough my words; and we must not think it strange if we, and what we say and do, be thus misrepresented. When the accusation was so weakly grounded, no marvellous that the sentence passed upon it was unjust, Thou shalt surely die. What he had said agreed with what God had said when he took possession of the temple, (1 Kings ix. 6—8.) If you shall at all turn from following me, then this house shall be abandoned; and yet he is condemned to die for saying it. It is not out of any concern for the honour of the temple, that they appear thus warm, but because they are resolved not to part with their sins, in which they flatter themselves with a conceit that the temple of the Lord will protect them; therefore, right or wrong, Thou shalt surely die. This outcry of the priests and prophets, and all the people, and the gathering together against Jeremiah, in a popular tumult, ready to pull him to pieces; were gathered about him; (so some read it;) they flocked together, some crying one thing, and some another. The people that were at first present, were hot against him, (v. 8.) but their clamours drew more together, only to see what the matter was. 11. He is brought before the court and indicted for it before the highest court of judicature they had. Here, 1. The princes of Judah were his judges, v. 10. These that filled the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David, the elders of Israel, they, hearing of this tumult in the temple, came up from the king's house, where they usually sat near the court, to the house of the Lord, to inquire into this matter, to see what tumult was done disorderedly. They sat down in the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house, and held a court, as it were, by a special commission of Oyer and Terminer. 2. The priests and prophets were his persecutors and accusers, and were violently set against him. They appealed to the princes and to all the people, to the court and the jury, whether this man be not worthy to die, v. 11. The corrupt priests and counterfeit prophets have always been the most bitter enemies of the prophets of the Lord; they had ends of their own to
serve, which they thought such preaching as this would be an obstruction to. When Jeremiah prophesied in the house of the king concerning the fall of the royal family, (ch. xxii. 1.) the court, though very corrupt, bore it patiently, and we do not find that they persecuted him for it; but when he comes into the house of the Lord, and touches the copyhold of the priests, and contradicts the lies and trifling of the false prophets, then he is adjudged worthy of death, and death is prepared for him, and the priests here rule by their means, Jer. v. 31.

Observe, When Jeremiah is indicted before the princes, the stress of his accusation is laid upon what he said concerning the city, because they thought the princes would be most concerned about that. But concerning the words spoken, they appeal to the people, Ye have heard what he hath said, it be given in evidence.”

113. Jeremiah makes his defence before the princes and the people. He does not go about to deny the words, or to diminish aught from them; what he has said he will stand to, though it cost him his life; he owns that he had prophesied against this house, and this city. But:

1. He asserts that he did this by good authority: not maliciously, not hastily, not out of any ill-will to his country, or any dissatisfaction to the government in church or state, but, The Lord sent me to prophesy thus; so he begins his apology, (v. 12.) and so he concludes it, for this is that he resolves to abide by as sufficient to hear him out; (v. 13.) Of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you, to speak all these words. As long as ministers keep close to the instance they have from heaven, they need not fear the opposition they may meet with from hell or earth. He pleads that he is but a messenger, and if he faithfully deliver his message, he must bear no blame; but he is a messenger from the Lord, to whom they were accountable as well as he, and therefore might demand regard. If he speak but what God appointed him to speak, he is under the divine protection, and whatever affront they offer to the ambassador, will be resented by the Prince that sent him.

2. He shows them that he did it with a good design, and that it was their fault if they did not make a good use of it. It was said, not by way of fatal sentence, but of fair warning; if they would take the warning, they might prevent the execution of the sentence. If it be said, I have told them all this many times, but they tell me of my danger, while I have an opportunity of avoiding it, and not rather return him thanks for it, as the greatest kindness he could do me? *I have indeed (says Jeremiah) prophesied against this city; but if you will now amend your ways and your doings, the threatened ruin shall be prevented, which was the thing I aimed at in giving you the warning.* They are very unjust who complain of ministers for preaching hell and damnation, when it is only to keep them from that place of torment, and to bring them to heaven and salvation.

3. He therefore warns them of their danger, if they proceed against him; (v. 14.) *As for me, the matter is not great what becomes of me; behold, I am in your hand; you know I am; I neither have any property nor name in my native country; whatever you do to me, or is it so much my concern to save my own life; do with me as seems meet unto you;* if I be led to the slaughter, it shall be as a lamb. Note, It becomes God’s ministers, that are warm in preaching, to be calm in suffering, and to behave submissively to the powers that are over them, though they be persecuting powers. But for themselves, they shall not be treated as a malefactor, or as a villain, or as a wretch wretchedly deceived, it would but add to their guilt, and aggravate their ruin. Their own consciences could not but tell them, that if Jeremiah was (as certainly he was) sent of God to bring them this message, it was at their utmost peril if they treated him for it as a malefactor. Those that persecute God’s ministers, hurt not them so much as themselves.

16. Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets, This man is not worthy to die; for he hath spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God. 17. Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, 18. Micah the Morastith prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Zion shall be ploughed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. 19. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the Lord, and besought the Lord, and the Lord repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls. 20. And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the Lord, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath-jearim, who prophesied against this city, and against this land, according to all the words of Jeremiah: 21. And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death; but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt; 22. And Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt; namely, Elchanan the son of Achbor, and certain men with him into Egypt: 23. And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt; and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king, who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people. 24. Nevertheless, the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.

Here is, 1. The acquitting of Jeremiah from the charge exhibited against him. He had indeed spoken the words as they were laid in the indictment; but they are not looked upon to be seditions or treasonable, ill-intended, or of any bad tendency, and therefore the court and country agree to find him not guilty. The priests and prophets, notwithstanding his rational plea for himself, continued to demand judgment against him; but the princes, and all the people, are clear in it, This man is not worthy to die; (v. 16.) for (say they) he hath spoken to us, not of himself, but in the name of the Lord our God. And are they willing to own that he did in fact speak to them in the name of the Lord, and that that Lord is their God? Why then did they not amend their ways and doings, and take the method
he prescribed to prevent the ruin of their country? If they say, His prophecy is but from him, it may just be true; for they did not believe in it. Matth. xxi. 25. Note, It is pity that those who are so far convinced of the divine original of gospel-preaching, as to protect it from the malice of others, do not submit to the power and influence of it themselves.

2. A precedent quoted to justify them in accuting Jeremiah. Some of the elders of the land, either the ministers before mentioned, or the more eminent men of the people, stood up, and put the assembly in mind of a former case, as is usual with us in giving judgment; for the wisdom of our predecessors is a direction to us. The case referred to is that of Micah. We have extant the book of his prophecy among the minor prophets. (1.) Was it thought strange that Jeremiah prophesied against this city and the temple? Micah did so before him, even in the reign of Hezekiah, that reign of reformation, v. 18. Micah said it as publicly as Jeremiah had now spoken to the same purport, Zion shall be floughed like a field, the building shall be all destroyed, so that nothing shall hinder but it may be ploughed; Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the house on which the temple is built shall be as the high places of the forest, overrun with briers and thorns. This prophet did not so speak this, but wrote it, and left it on record; we find it, Mic. iii. 12. By this it appears that a man may be, as Micah was, a true prophet of the Lord, and yet may prophesy the destruction of Zion and Jerusalem. When we threaten secure sinners with the taking away of the Spirit of God and the kingdom of God from them, and declining churches with the removal of the candlestick; we say no more than what he said; and it may be for what we have warrant from the word of God to say. (2.) Was it thought fit by the princes to justify Jeremiah in what he had done? It was what Hezekiah did before them in a like case. Did Hezekiah, and the people of Judah, the representatives of the people, the commons in parliament, did they complain of Micah the prophet? Did they impeach him, or make an act to silence him, and put him to death? No; on the contrary, they took the warning he gave them. Hezekiah, that renowned prince, of blessed memory, set a good example before his successors, for he feared the Lord as Noah, who, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, was moved with fear. Micah's preaching drove him to his knees; he besought the Lord to turn away the judgment threatened, and to be reconciled to them; and he found it was not in vain to do so, for the Lord repented him of the evil, and returned in mercy to them; he sent an angel, who routed the army of the Assyrians, that threatened to have ploughed Zion like a field, v. 19. Hezekiah got good by the preaching, and then you may be sure he would do no harm to the preacher. These elders conclude this way of speaking was not proper for the state, if they should gratify the importunity of the priests and prophets in putting Jeremiah to death; Thus might we procure great evil against our souls. Note, It is good to deter ourselves from sin, with the consideration of the mischief we shall certainly do to ourselves by it, and the irreparable damage it will be to our own souls.

Hezekiah's case was an instance of another prophet that was put to death by Jehoiakim for prophesying as Jeremiah had done, v. 20, &c. Some make this to be urged by the persecutors, as a case that favoured the prosecution, a modern case, in which speaking such words as Jeremiah had spoken was adjudged treason. Others think that the elders who were advocates for Jeremiah, alleged this, to show that thus they might procure great evil against their souls, for it would be adding sin to sin. Jehoiakim, the present king, had slain one prophet already, and then he should not do it again. In slaying another. Hezekiah, who protected Micah, was preserved; but did Jehoiakim prosper, who slew Urijah? No, they all saw the contrary. As good examples, and the good consequences of them, should encourage us in that which is good, so the examples of bad men, and the bad consequences of them, should deter us from that which is evil. But some good interpreters think thementioned case, of which the narrative from the historian that penned the book, Jeremiah, is borrowed, and besides, to make Jeremiah's delivery by means of the princes the more wonderful, takes notice of this that happened about the same time; for both were in the reign of Jehoiakim, and this in the beginning of his reign, v. 1. Observe, (1.) Urijah's prophecy; it was against this city, and this land, according to all the words of Jeremiah. The prophets of the Lord were burned in their testimony, and one would have thought that out of the mouth of so many witnesses the word should have been regarded. (2.) The prosecution of him for it, v. 21. Jehoiakim and his courtiers were exasperated against him, and sought to put him to death: in this wicked design the king himself was principally concerned. (3.) His absconding thereupon; When he heard that the king was determined to put him to death, he fled his life, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt. This was certainly his fault, and an effect of the weakness of his faith, and it sped accordingly. He distrusted God, and his power to protect him and bear him out; he was too much under the power of that fear of man, which brings a snare. It looked as if he durst not stand to what he had said, or was ashamed of his Master. It was especially unbecoming him to flee from Jerusalem into Egypt, where he might have expected the support of the land of Israel, and to throw himself quite out of the way of being useful. Note, There are many that have much grace, but they have little courage; that are very honest, but withal very timorous. (4.) His execution notwithstanding. Jehoiakim's malice, one would have thought, might have contented itself with his banishment, and it might have sufficed to have driven him out of the country, but they are blood thirsty that hate the upright; (Prov. xxxix. 10.) it was the life, that precious life, that he hunted after, and nothing else would satisfy him. So inplacable is his revenge, that he sends a party of soldiery into Egypt, some hundreds of miles, and they bring him back by force of arms. It would not sufficiently gratify him to have him slain in Egypt, but he must feed his eyes with the bloody spectacle; they brought him to Jehoiakim, and he slew him with the sword, for aught I know, with his own hands. Yet neither did this satisfy his insatiable malice, but he loads the dead body of the good man with infamy, would not allow it the decent respects usually and justly paid to the remains of men of distinction, but cast it into the graves of the common people, as common as the grave of the Lord; thus was the shield of Saul vilely cast away, as though he had not been anointed with oil. Thus Jehoiakim hoped to ruin his reputation with the people, that no heed might be given to his predictions, and to deter others from prophesying in like manner; but in vain; Jeremiah says the same. There is no contending with the word of God. Herod though he had gaged from point to point, and cut off the Baptist's head, but found himself deceived, when, soon after, he heard of Jesus Christ, and said, in a fright, This is John the Baptist. 4. Here is Jeremiah's deliverance. Though Urijah was lately put to death, and persecutors, when they have tasted the blood of saints, are apt to thirst after more, (as Herod, Acts xii. 2, 3.) yet God wonderfully preserved Jeremiah, though he did not
ffice, as Urijah did, but stood his ground. Ordinary ministers may use ordinary means, provided they be lawful ones, for their own preservation; but they thus expose themselves to the usual mode of preserving the extraordinary protection. God raised up a friend for Jeremiah, whose hand was with him; he took him by the hand in a friendly way, encouraged him, assisted him, appeared for him. It was “Ahiak the son of Shaphan, one that was a minister of state in Josiah’s time; we read of him, 2 Kings xxii. 12. Some think Gedaliah was the son of this Ahiakim. He was a royal personage, and being a favourer of the princes, and he used it in favour of Jeremiah, to prevent the further designs of the priests and prophets against him, who would have had him turned over into the hand of the people; not those people (v. 16.) that had adjudged him innocent, but the rude and insolent mob, whom they could persuade by their cursed insinuations not only to cry, Crucify him, crucify him, but to strow him to death in a popular tumult; for perhaps Jehoiakim had been so reproached by his own conscience for slaying Urijah, that they despairs of making him the tool of their malice. Note, God can, when he pleases, raise up great men to patronise good men; and it is an encouragement to us to trust him in the way of duty, that he has all men’s hearts in his hands.

CHAP. XXVII.

Jeremiah the prophet, since he cannot persuade people to submit to God’s precepts, and so prevent the destruction of their country by the king of Babylon, is here persuading them to submit to God’s providence, by yielding tamely to the king of Babylon, and becoming tributaries to him, which was the wisest course they could now take, and would be a mitigation of the calamity, and prevent the laying of their country waste by fire and sword; the sacrificing of their liberties would be the saving of their lives. 1. He gives this counsel, in God’s name, to the kings of the neighbouring nations, that they might make the best of bad, assuring them that there was no remedy, but they must serve the king of Babylon; and yet in time there should be relief, for his dominion should last but 70 years, v. 1-11. II. He gives this counsel to Zedekiah king of Judah particularly, (v. 12.) and to the priests and people, assuring them that the king of Babylon should still proceed against them, till they were entirely subdued; and then a prophet, by a particular and solemn submission would be the only way to mitigate the calamity, and make it easy, v. 12-22. Thus the prophet, if they would but have heartened to him, would have directed them in the paths of true policy as well as of true piety.

1. In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah king of Judah, came this word unto Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 2. Thus saith the Lord to me, Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck. 3. And send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Syria, and to the king of Tyrus, and to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah; 4. And command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Thus shall ye say unto your masters: 5. I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power, and by my out-stretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. 6. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given also to serve him. 7. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son’s son, until the very time of his land come; and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him. 8. And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the Lord, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand. 9. Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: 10. For they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish. 11. But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the Lord; and they shall till it, and dwell therein.

Some difficulty occurs in the date of this prophecy. This word is said to come to Jeremiah in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, (v. 1,) and yet the messengers, to whom he is to deliver the badges of servitude, are said (v. 3,.) to come to Zedekiah king of Judah, who reigned not till 11 years after the beginning of Jehoiakim’s reign. Some make it an error of the copy, and that it should be read, (v. 1,) in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, for which some negligent scribe, having his eye on the title of the foregoing chapter, wrote Jehoiakim. And if one would admit a mistake any where, it should be here, for Zedekiah is mentioned again, (v. 12,) and the next prophecy is dated the same year, and said to be in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, ch. xxviii. 1. Or Lightfoot solves it thus. In the beginning of Jehoiakim’s reign, Jeremiah is to make these bonds and yokes, and to put them upon his own neck, in token of Judah’s subjection to the king of Babylon, which began at that time; but he is to send them to the neighbouring kings afterward in the reign of Zedekiah, of whose succession to Jehoiakim, and the ambassadors sent to him, mention is made by way of prediction. Jeremiah is to prepare a sign of the general reduction of all these countries into subjection to the king of Babylon, v. 2. Make thee bonds and yokes, yokes with bonds to fasten them, that the beast may not slip his neck out of the yoke. Into these the prophet must put his own neck, to make them taken notice of as a prophetic representation; for every one would inquire, What is the meaning of Jeremiah’s yokes? We find him with one on, ch. xxviii. 19. Hereby he intimates that he advised them to nothing but what he was resolved to do himself; for he was none of those that bind heavy burdens on others, which they themselves will not touch with one of their fingers. Ministers must thus lay themselves under the weight and obligation of what they preach to others.
II. He is to send this, with a sermon addressed to it, to all the neighbouring princes; those a, mentioned, (v. 3,) shall lay next to the land of Edomian.

It should seem, there was a treaty of alliance got between the King of Judah and all those other princes, Jerusalem was the place appointed for the conference; thither they all sent their plenipotentiaries; and as it was agreed they should bind themselves in a league offensive and defensive, to stand by one another, in opposition to the common danger that threatened the greatness of the king of Babylon, and to reduce his exorbitant power. They had great confidence in their strength thus united, and were ready to call themselves the High Allies; but when the envoys were returning to their respective masters, with the ratification of this treaty, Jeremiah gives each of them a yoke to carry to his master, to signify to him that he must either by consent or by compulsion become a servant to the king of Babylon, let him choose which he will. In the sermon on this sign,

1. God asserts his own indisputable right to dispose of kingdoms as he pleases, v. 5. He is the Creator of all things; he made the earth at first, established it, and abides; it is still the same, though one generation passeth away, and another comes; he still by a continued creation sustains the beauty of the earth, and it is by his great power and outstretched arm. His arm has infinite strength, though it be stretched out. Upon this account, he may give and convey a property and dominion to whomsoever he pleases. As he hath graciously given the earth to the children of men in general, (Ps. cxv. 16.) so he gives to each his share of it, be it more or less. Note, Whatever advantage and happiness belong to the good of this world, it is what God sees fit to allow us; we ourselves should therefore be content, though we have ever so little, and not envy any their share, though they have ever so much.

2. He publishes a grant of all these countries to Nebuchadnezzar. Know all men by these presents. Scint presentes et futuri.—Let those of the present and those of the future age know. This is to certify all who may it concern, that I have given all these lands, with all the wealth of them, into the hands of the king of Babylon, even the beasts of the field, whether tame or wild, have I given to him, parks and pastures, they are all his own. Nebuchadnezzar was a proud, wicked man, an idolater; and yet God, in his providence, gives him this large dominion, these vast possessions. Note, The things that are the best things, for God often gives the largest share of them to bad men, that are rivals with him, and rebels against him. He was a wicked man, and yet what he had, he had by divine grant. Note, Dominion is not founded in grace. Those that have not any colourable title to eternal happiness, may yet have a justifiable title to their temporal good things. Nebuchadnezzar is a very bad man, and yet God calls him his servant, because he acknowledged him as an instrument of his providence for the chastising of the nations, and particularly his own people; and for his service therein, he thus liberally repaid him. Those whom God makes use of, shall not lose by him; much more will he be found the bountiful Rewarder of all those that designedly and sincerely serve him.

Of these things they shall all be unavoidably brought under the dominion of the king of Babylon, for a time; (v. 7.) All nations, all these nations, and many others, shall serve him and his son, and his son's son. His son was Evil-merodach, and his son's Belshazzar, in whom his kingdom ceased; then the time of reckoning with his land came, when the tables were turned, and many nations and great kings, incorporated into the empire of the Medes and Persians, served themselves of him, as before, ch. xxv. 14. Thus Adonibezek was trampled upon himself, as he had trampled on other kings.

4. He threatens those with military execution, that stood out, and would not submit to the king of Babylon; (v. 8.) That nation that will not put their neck under his yoke, I will punish with sword and famine, with one judgment after another, till it is consumed. Note, It was the enemy's great policy to use unjust and barbarous in invading the rights and liberties of his neighbours, thus, and forcing them into a submission to him; yet God had just and holy ends in permitting it, to punish these nations for their idolatry and gross immoralities. They that would not serve the God that made them, were justly made to serve their enemies that sought to ruin them.

5. He shows how the vanity of all the haughtiness they fed themselves with, that they should preserve their liberties, v. 9, 10. These nations had their prophets too, that pretended to foretell future events by the stars, or by dreams, or enchantments; and they, to please their patrons, and because they would themselves have it so, flattered them with assurances that they should not serve the king of Babylon. Thus they designed to animate them to a vigorous resistance; and which though they had no ground for it, they hoped hereby to do them service. But he tells them that it would prove to their destruction; for by resisting they would provoke the conqueror to deal severely with them, to remove them, and drive them out into a miserable captivity, in which they should all be lost, and buried in oblivion. Particular prophecies against these nations that bordered on Israel severely, the ruin of which is here foretold in the general, we shall meet with, ch. xlviii. and Ezek. xxv. which had the same accomplishment with this here. Note, When God judges, he will overcome.

6. He puts them in a fair way to prevent their destruction, by a quiet and easy submission, v. 11. The nations that will be content to serve the king of Babylon, and pay him tribute for seventy years, (ten apprenticeships,) those will I let remain still in their own land. They that will bend shall not break. Perhaps the dominion of the king of Babylon may bear no harder upon them than that of their own kings had done. It is often more a point of honour than true wisdom, to prefer liberty before life. It is not mentioned to the disgrace of Issachar, that because he was grown rich and pleasant, that he might peaceably enjoy it, he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant to tribute, (Gen. xlix. 14, 15.) as these here are advised to do; Serve the king of Babylon, and you shall till the land and dwell therein. Some would condemn this as the evidence of a mean spirit, but the prophet recommends it as that of a meek spirit, which yields to necessity, and by a quiet submission to the hardest terms of Providence, makes the best of bad; it is better to do so, than by struggling to make it worse.

Leviathan is in durance. Quidque currit ingenio est refusus. Hor.—When we need's must bear, enduring patience makes the burreth light. Cæs. Many might have prevented destroying providences, by humbling themselves under humming providences. It is better to take up a lighter cross in our way than to pull a heavier on our own head.

12. I spake also to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. 13 Why will ye die, thou and
thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the Lord hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? 14. Therefore hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you. 15. For I have not sent them, saith the Lord, yet they prophesy a lie in my name, that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you. 16. Also I spake to the priests, and to all this people, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Hearken not to the words of your prophets that prophesy unto you, saying, Behold, the vessels of the Lord's house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you. 17. Hearken not unto them; serve the king of Babylon, and live: wherefore should this city be made waste? 18. But if they be prophets, and if the word of the Lord be with them, let them now make intercession to the Lord of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the Lord, and in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, go not to Babylon. 19. For thus saith the Lord of hosts concerning the pillars, and concerning the sea, and concerning the bases, and concerning the residue of the vessels that remain in this city, 20. Which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took not, when he carried away captive Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem; 21. Yea, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain in the house of the Lord, and in the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem; 22. They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the Lord: then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place.

What was said to all the nations, is here with a particular tenderness applied to the nation of the Jews, for whom Jeremiah was sensibly concerned. The case at present stood thus; Judah and Jerusalem had often contested with the king of Babylon, and still were worsted; many both of their valuable persons and their valuable goods were carried to Babylon already, and some of the vessels of the Lord's house particularly. Now, how this struggle would issue, was the question. They had those among them at Jerusalem, who pretended to be prophets, who bade them hold out, and they should, in a little time, be too hard for the king of Babylon, and recover all that they had lost. Now Jeremiah is sent to bid them yield and knock under; for that, instead of recovering what they had lost, they should otherwise lose all that remained; and to press them to this, is the scope of these verses.

1. Jeremiah humbly addresses the king of Judah, to persuade him to surrender to the king of Baby-

lon; his act would be the people's, and would determine them, and therefore he speaks to him as to them all; (v. 12.) Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and live. Is it their wisdom to submit to the heavy iron yoke of a cruel tyrant, that they may secure the lives of their bodies; and is it not much more our wisdom to submit to the yoke of our righteous King Jesus Christ, that we may secure the lives of our souls? Bring down your spirits to repentance and faith, and that is the way to bring up your spirits to heaven and glory. And with much more cogency and compassion may we expostulate with perishing souls than Jeremiah here expostulates with a perishing people, "Why will ye die by the sword and by the famine, ye people? Why do ye not turn yourselves upon, under pretence of avoiding miserable lives?" What God had spoken, it general, of all those that would not submit to the king of Babylon, he would have them to apply to themselves, and be afraid of. It were well if sinners would, in like manner, be afraid of the destruction threatened against all those that will not have Christ to reign over them, and reason this with themselves, "Why should we die the second death, which is a thousand times worse than that by sword and famine, when we might submit and live?"

11. He addresses himself likewise to the priests and the people, (v. 16.) to persuade them to serve the king of Babylon, that they might live, and might prevent the desolation of the city; (v. 17.) "The matter is far gone here, they were upon the brink of ruin, which they had not been brought to if they would have taken Jeremiah's counsel, yet he continues his friendly admonitions to them, to save the last stake and manage that wisely, and now at length in this their day to understand the things that belong to their peace, when they had but one day to turn them in.

11. In which these addresses he warns them against giving credit to the false prophets that worked them asleep in their security, because they saw that they loved to slumber; "Hearken not to the words of the prophets, (v. 14.) your prophets, v. 16. They are not God's prophets, he never sent them, they do not serve him, nor seek to please him; they are yours, for they say what you would have them say, and not what you must please you." Two things their prophets flattered them into thine belief of.

1. That the power which the king of Babylon had gained over them, should now shortly be broken. They said, (v. 14.) "You shall not serve the king of Babylon: you need not submit voluntarily, for you shall not be compelled to submit." This was false, being in the name of the Lord, (v. 15.) as if God had sent them to the people on this errand, in kindness to them, that they might not dispare themselves by an inglorious surrender. But it was a lie. They said that God sent them; but that was false, he disowns it, I have not sent them, saith the Lord. They said that they should never be brought into subjection to the king of Babylon, but this was false too, the event proved it so. They said that to hold out to the last would be the way to secure themselves and their city; but that was false, for it would certainly end in their being driven out and perishing. So that it was all a lie, from first to last; and the prophets that deceived the people with these
lies, did, in the issue, but deceive themselves, the blind leaders and the blind followers fell together into the ditch; that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you; which will be so far from warraniting your security, that they will be the more to secure themselves. Note, They that encourage sinners to go on in their sinful ways, will in the end perish with them.

2. They prophesied that the vessels of the temple, which the king of Babylon had already carried away, should now shortly be brought back; (v. 16.) this they fed the priests with the hopes of, knowing how much it would be to them to love the gold of the temple better than the temple that sanctified the gold. These vessels were taken away when Jeremiah was carried captive into Babylon, v. 20. We have the story, and it is a melancholy one, 2 Kings xxiv. 13-15. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 10. All the goodly vessels, that is, all the vessels of gold that were in the house of the Lord, with all the treasures, were taken as prey, and brought to Babylon. This was grievous to them above all things, for the temple was their pride and confidence, and the stripping of that was too plain an indication of that which the true prophet told them, that their God was departed from them. Their false prophets therefore had no other way to make them easy than by telling them that the king of Babylon should be forced to restore them in a little while. Now here, (1.) We may think of preserving the vessels that remained, by their prayers, rather than of bringing back those that were gone, by their prophecies; (v. 18.) If they be prophesies, as they pretend, and if the word of the Lord be with them—if they have any intercourse with Heaven, and any interest there, let them improve it for the stopping of the progress of the judgment, let them step into the gap, and stand with them in their calamity, amid both the living and the dead, between that which is carried away and that which remains, that the plague may be stayed; let them make intercession with the Lord of hosts, that the vessels which are left go not after the rest. [1.] Instead of prophesying, let them pray. Note, Prophets must be praying men; by being much in prayer they must make it to appear, that they keep up a correspondence with Heaven. We must not be in prayer for long days, or late hours, as they that hear thence, who do not frequently by prayer send thither. By praying for the safety and prosperity of the sanctuary they must make it to appear that, as becomes prophets, they are of a public spirit; and by the success of their prayers it will appear that God favours them. [2.] Instead of being concerned for the retrieving of what they had lost, they must build themselves up for the securing of what was left, and take it as a great favour if they can gain that point. When God’s judgments are abroad, we must not seek great things, but be thankful for a little.

(2.) He assures them that even this point should not be gained, but the brazen vessels should go after the golden ones, v. 19-22. Nebuchadnezzar had found so good a booty once, that he would be sure to come again, and take all he could find, not only in the house of the Lord, but in the king’s house. They shall all be carried to Babylon in triumph, and there shall they be. But he concludes with a gracious promise, that the time should come when they should all be returned: Until the day that I visit them in mercy, according to appointment, and then I will bring those vessels up again, and restore them to this place, to their place. Surely they were under the protection of a special Providence, else they had been melted down, and put to some other use; but there was to be a second temple, for which they were to be reserved. We read particularly of the return of them, Ezra i. 8. Note, Though the return of the church’s prosperity do not come in our time, we must not therefore despair of it, for it will come in God’s time. Though they who said, The vessels of the Lord’s house shall shortly be brought again, prophesied a lie, (v. 16.) yet he that said, They shall at length be brought again, prophesied the truth. We are apt to set our clock before God’s dial, and then to quarrel because they do not agree; but the Lord is a God of judgment, and it is fit that we should wait for him.

CHAP. XXVIII.

In the foregoing chapter, Jeremiah had charged those prophets with lies, who foretold the speedy breaking of the yoke of the king of Babylon, and the speedy return of the vessels of the sanctuary; now here we have his contest with a particular prophet upon those heads. I. Hananiah, a pretender to prophecy, in contradiction to Jeremiah, foretold the sinking of Nebuchadnezzar’s power, and the return both of the persons and of the vessels that were carried away; (v. 1-4.) and, as a sign of this, he brake the yoke from the neck of Jeremiah, v. 10, 11. II. Jeremiah wished his words might prove true, but appealed to the event, whether they were so or no, not doubting but they would disprove them, v. 5-9. III. The doom both of the deceived and the deceiver is here read. The people that were deceived, should have their yoke of wood turned into a yoke of iron, (v. 12-14.) and the prophet that was the deceiver, should be shortly cut off by death, and he was so, accordingly, within two months, v. 15-17.

1. And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeah, spake unto me in the house of the Lord, in the presence of the priests, and of all the people, saying, 2. Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. 3. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the Lord’s house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: 4. And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the Lord; for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. 5. Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah, in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the Lord. 6. Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: the Lord do so; the Lord perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the Lord’s house, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place. 7. Nevertheless, hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people; 3. The prophets that have been before me, and before thee of old, prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. 9. The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then
shall the prophet be known that the Lord hath truly sent him.

This struggle between a true prophet and a false one, is said here to have happened in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, and yet in the fourth year, for four years after, we shall be told, He called the beginning, or former part of it, because during those years he reigned under the dominion of the king of Babylon, and as a tributary to him; whereas the rest of his reign, which might well be called the latter part of it, in distinction from that former part, he reigned in rebellion against the king of Babylon. In this fourth year of his reign, he went in person to Babylon, (as we find, ch. lii. 1.) and it is probable that this gave the people some time that his negotiation in person would put a good end to the war, in which hope the false prophets encouraged them, this Hananiah particularly, who was of Gibon, a priest’s city, and therefore probably, himself a priest, as well as Jeremiah. Now here we have,

The prediction which Hananiah delivered publicly, solemnly, in the house of the Lord, and in the name of the Lord, in an august assembly, in the presence of the priests, and of all the people, who, probably, were expecting to have some message from heaven. In delivering this prophecy, he faced Jeremiah, he spake it to him, (v. 1.) designing to confront and contradict him, as much as to say, “Jeremiah, thou liest.” Now his prediction is, that the Lord would shortly destroy Judah and Jerusalem, should be speedily broken, that within two full years the vessels of the temple should be brought back, and Jeremiah, and all the captives that were carried away with him, should return; whereas Jeremiah had foretold that the yoke of the king of Babylon should be bound on yet faster, and that the vessels and captives should not return for 70 years. Now, upon the receiving of this sham prophecy, and comparing it with the messages that God sent by the true prophets, we may observe what a vast difference there is between them. Here is nothing of the spirit and life, the majesty of style and sublimity of expression, that appear in the discourses of God’s prophets, nothing of that divine flame and flashes. But that which is especially wanting here, is an air of piety; he spake with a great deal of confidence of his own righteousness and prosperity, but here is not a word of good counsel given them to repent and reform, and return to God, to pray, and seek his face, that they might be prepared for the favours God had in reserve for them. He promises them temporal mercies, in God’s name, but makes no mention of those spiritual mercies which God always promised should go along with them, and xxvii. 7. I will give them up into thine hand, to know me. By all which it appears that, whatever he pretended, he had only the spirit of the world, not the Spirit of God, (1 Cor. i. 12.) that he aimed to please, not to profit.

1. Jeremiah’s reply to this pretended prophecy:—1. He heartily wishes it might prove true; such an affliction has he for his country, and so truly desirable is he of the welfare of it, that he would be content to lie under the imputation of a false prophet, that their ruin might be prevented. He said, Amen, the Lord do so, the Lord perform thy words, v. 5, 6. This was not the first time that Jeremiah had prayed for his people, though he had prophesied against them, and deprecated the judgments which the Lord did often carry them through. Christ prayed, Father, if it be possible, that this cup pass from me, when yet he knew it must not pass from him. Though, as a faithful prophet, he foresaw and foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, yet, as a faithful Israelite, he prayed earnestly for the preservation of it, in obedience to that command, Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Though the will of God’s purpose is the rule of prophecy and patience, the will of his precept is the rule of prayer and practice. God himself, though he has determined, does not desire, the death of sinners, but would have all men to be saved. Jeremiah often interceded for his people, ch. xxviii. 20. They often had occasion to inculcate it to ingratiate themselves with the people by promising them peace; now the prophet shows that he bore them as great a good-will as their prophets did, whom they were so fond of; and though he had no warrant from God to promise them peace, yet he earnestly desired it, and prayed for it. How strangely was this besought, who cautioned those whom did them the greatest wrong imaginable by flattering them, and persecuted him who did them the greatest service imaginable by interceding for them! See ch. xxvii. 18.

2. He appeals to the event, to prove it false, v. 7.-9. The false prophets reflected upon Jeremiah, as Ahab upon Micah, because he never prophesied of a thing concerning them, but evil; now he pleads that this had been foretold, as some of the other prophets had delivered, so that it might not be looked upon as a strange thing, or as rendering his mission doubtful, for prophets of old prophesied against many countries and great kingdoms, so bold were they in delivering the messages which God sent by them, and so far from fearing men, or seeking to please them, as Hananiah did; they made no more of it, than of the priests and scribes of Babylon, who boldly and openly prophesied, that the city, and the temple, and the kings of Babylon should be destroyed, which thing was wholly foretold by Jeremiah. Now, if Jeremiah had foretold rebellion, war, famine, and pestilence, and that he who was the first to prophesy to Babylon, and to bring on them the greatest wrong imaginable by flattering them, and persecuted him who did them the greatest service imaginable by interceding for them; if so, and if not, he will appear to be a cheat and impostor.

10. Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah’s neck, and brake it. 11. And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations, within the space of two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way. 12. Then the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah the prophet, (after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah,) saying, 13. Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron. 14. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall...
serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also. 15. Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah, The Lord hath not sent thee; but thou maddest this people to trust in a lie. 16. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord.

17. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year, in the seventh month.

We have here an instance,

1. Of the insolvency of the false prophet. To complete the affront he designed Jeremiah, he took the yoke from off his neck, which he carried as a memorial of what he had prophesied concerning the enslaving of the nations to Nebuchadnezzar, and he brake it, that he might give a sign of the accomplishment of his prophecy, as Jeremiah had given of his, and might seem to have conquered him, and to have defeated the intention of his prophecy. See how the lying spirit in the mouth of this false prophet mimics the language of the Spirit of truth. Thus saith the Lord, So will I break the yoke of the king of Babylon, not only from the neck of this nation, but from the neck of all nations, within two full years. Whether by the force of a heated imagination Hananiah had persuaded himself to believe this, or whether he knew it to be false, and only persuaded them to believe it, does not appear; but it is plain that he speaks with abundance of assurance. It is no new thing for lies to be fathered upon the God of truth.

11. Of the patience of the true prophet. Jeremiah quietly went his way, and, when he was reviled, he reviled not again, and would not contend with one that was in the height of his fury, and in the midst of the priests and people that were wildly set against him. The reason why he went his way, was, not because he had nothing to answer, but because he was willing to stay till God was pleased to furnish him with a direct and immediate answer, which as yet he had not received. He expected that God would send a special message to Hananiah, and he would say nothing till he had received that; I, as a deaf man, heard not, for thou wilt hear, and thou shalt answer, Lord, for me. It may sometimes be our wisdom rather to retreat than to contend. 

Currenti cede furori—Give place unto wrath.

111. Of the justice of God in giving judgment between Jeremiah and his adversary. Jeremiah went his way, as a man in whose mouth there was no rebuke, but God soon put a word into his mouth, for he will appear for those who silently commit their cause to him.

1. The word of God, in the mouth of Jeremiah, is ratified and confirmed. Let not Jeremiah himself dissemble the truth of what he had delivered in God's name, because it met with such a daring opposition and contradiction. If what we have spoken be the truth of God, we must not unsay it because men gainsay it; for great is the truth, and will prevail. It will stand, therefore let us stand to it, and not fear that men's unbelief or blasphemy will make it no effect. Hananiah had broken the iron yoke, but Jeremiah must make for them yokes of iron, which cannot be broken: (v. 13.) for (says God) I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, which shall be heavier, and bind harder, upon them, (v. 14.) that they may serve the king of Babylon, and not be able to shake off the yoke; however they may struggle, for they shall serve him whether they will or no; and who is he that can contend with God's counsel? What was said before is repeated again, I have given him the beasts of the field also, and all the power of the kingdom significant in that; and had they by their wickedness made themselves like the beasts that perish, and therefore deserved to be ruled by an arbitrary power, as beasts are ruled, and such a power Nebuchadnezzar ruled with, for whom he would be set, and whom he would he set above.

2. Hananiah is sentenced to die for contradicting it, and Jeremiah, when he has received commission from God, boldly tells him so to his face; though, before he received that commission, he went away, and said nothing.

(1.) The crimes of which Hananiah stands convicted, are, cheating the people, and affronting God; Thou makest this people to trust in a lie, encouraging them to hope that they shall have peace, which will make their destruction the more terrible to them when it comes; yet this was not the worst; Thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord, thou hast taught them to despise all the good counsel given them in God's name by the true prophets, and hast rendered it ineffectual. Those have a great deal to answer for, who, by telling sinners that they shall have peace though they go on, harden their hearts in a contempt of the reproofs and admonitions of the word, and to the means and methods, that they may be brought to repentance.

(2.) The judgment given against him, is, I will cast thee off from the face of the earth, as unworthy to live upon it; then shall be buried in it; this year thou shalt die, and die as a rebel against the Lord, to whom death will come with a sting and a curse. This sentence was executed, v. 17. Hananiah died the same year, within two months: for his prophecy was fulfilled, (1.) and his death was in the seventh. Good men may perhaps be suddenly taken off by death, in the midst of their days, and in mercy to them, as Josiah was; but this being foretold, as the punishment of his sin, and coming to pass accordingly, it may safely be construed as a testimony from Heaven against him, and a confirmation of Jeremiah's mission. And if the people's hearts had not been wretchedly hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, it would have prevented their being further hardened by the deceitfulness of their prophets.

CHAP. XXIX.

The contest between Jeremiah and the false prophets was carried on before by preaching; here by writing: there we had sermon against them as a public assembly, and a letter against them, and for some of the false prophets are now carried away into captivity in Babylon, while Jeremiah remains in his own country. Now here is, 1. A letter which Jeremiah wrote to the captive in Babylon, against their prophets that they had there, (v. 1.-3.) in which letter, 1. He endeavours to reconcile them to their captivity, to be easy under it, and to make the best of it, v. 4.-8. He cautions them not to give any credit to their false preaching, and for their own sakes, who fear for their own safety, to inquire into the truth of the matter, v. 9.-11. He assures them that God would restore them in mercy to their own land again, at the end of 70 years, v. 11.-14. He foretells the destruction of those prophets that professed to contain the word and to speak in God's name, v. 15. He promises them that they should be persecuted with one judgment after another, and sent at last into captivity, v. 15.-19. He promises the destruction of two of their false prophets that they had in Babylon, with whom they had dealt, v. 19.-26. He sets them bad examples; (v. 20., 23.) and this is the purport of Jeremiah's letter. 11. Here is a letter which Shemaiah, a false prophet in Babylon, wrote to the priests at Jerusalem, to stir them up to persecute Jeremiah, (v. 24., 29.) and a denunciation of God's wrath against him for writing such a letter, v. 30., 32. Such struggles as these have there always been between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

1. NOW these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent
from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon. 2. (After that Jeremiah the king, and the queen, and the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the carpenters, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem.) 3. By the hand of Elnathan the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnez-

zar king of Babylon,) saying, 4. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon, 5. Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; 6. Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may increase there, and not diminished. 7. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

We are here told,

1. That Jeremiah wrote to the captives in Babylon, in the name of the Lord. Jeremiah had surrendered himself a prisoner, with the queen his mother, the chamberlains of his household, called here the eunuchs, many of the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, who were at that time the most active men; the carpenters and smiths likewise, being demanded, were yielded up, that those who remained might not have any proper hands to fortify their city, or furnish themselves with weapons of war; by this tame submission it was hoped that Nebuchadnezzar would be pacified. Such低价的 letter (Jeremiah 39:13) as Jeremiah wrote to Nebuchadnezzar, laid his antagonist fastrores; but the iniperious conqueror grows upon their concessions, like Benhadad upon Ahab's, 1 Kings xx. 5, 6. And not content with this, when these were departed from Jerusalem, he comes again, and fetches away many more of the elders, the priests, the prophets, and the people; (v. 1.) such as he thought fit, or such as he thought his own hands on, and carries them to Babylon. The case of these captives was very melancholy, the rather, because they, being thus distinguished from the rest of their brethren who continued in their own land, looked as if they were greater sinners than all men who dwelt at Jerusa-

lem. Jeremiah therefore writes a letter to them to comfort them, assuring them that they had no reason either to despair of the Lord, or to envy their brethren that were left behind. Note, 1. The word of God written, is as truly given by in-

spiration of God as his word spoken was; and this was the proper way of spreading the knowledge of God's will among his children scattered abroad. 2. We may serve God, and do good, by writing to our friends at a distance pious letters of seasonable com-

forts and wholesome counsels. Whom we cannot speak to, we may write to; that which is written

remains. This letter of Jeremiah's was sent to the captives in Babylon by the hands of the ambassadors whom king Zedekiah sent to Nebuchadnezzar, probably to persuade him to send tribute, and renew his sub-
m ission to him, or to treat of peace with him, in which treaty the captives might perhaps hope that they should be included, v. 3. By such messengers Jeremiah chose to send this message, to put an honour upon it because it was a message from God. Or, perhaps, because there was no settled way of sending letters to Babylon, but as such an occasion as this offered. And then it made the condition of the captives the more melancholy, that they could rarely hear from their friends and relations they had left behind, which is some reviving and satisfaction to those that are separated from one another.

II. We are here told what he wrote. A copy of a letter at large follows here to v. 24. In these,

1. He assures them that he wrote in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, who emitted the letter; Jeremiah was but the scribe or amanu-

enus. It would be comfortable to them, in their captivity, to hear that God is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, and is therefore able to help and deliver them; and that he is the God of Israel still, so God in remembrance of his people, that he would be comforted with them, and their enemies for the present are too hard for them; this would likewise be an admonition to them to stand upon their guard against all temptations to the idolatry of Babylon, because the God of Israel, the God whom they served, is Lord of hosts. God's sending to them in this letter might be an encour-

agement to them in their captivity, as it was an evidence that he had not cast them off, had not abandoned them and disinherit them, though he was displeased with them and corrected them; for if the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have written to them.

2. God by him owns the hand he had in their captivity; I have caused you to be carried away, (v. 4.) and again, v. 7. All the force of the king of Babylon could not have done it, if God had not or-

dered it; nor could he have any power against them, but what was given him from above. If God caused them to be carried captives, they might be sure that he neither did them any wrong, nor meant them any hurt. Note, It will help very much to reconcile us to our troubles, and to make us patient under them, to consider that they are what God appointed for our good; 1 Peter iv. 19; I feared not my mouth, be-

cause than did it.

3. He bids them think of nothing but settling there; and therefore let them resolve to make the best of it; (v. 5, 6.) Build ye houses, and dwell in them, &c. By all this it is intimated to them, (1.) That they must not feed themselves with hopes of a speedy return out of the land of Babylon; but keep their hands on, and, consequently, uneasy; they would apply themselves to no business, take no comfort, but be always tiring themselves, and provoking their conquerors, with the expectations of relief; and their disappointment at last would sink them into despair, and make their condition much more miserable than otherwise it would be: let them rather form with themselves, and their families, to be useful and serviceable to others, and accommodate themselves to it as well as they can. Let them build, and plant, and marry, and dispose of their children there, as if they were at home in their own land; let them take a pleasure in seeing their families built up and multiplied, for through they must expect themselves to die in captivity, yet their children may live to see better days. If they live in the fear of God, what should hinder them but they may live comfortably in Babylon? They cannot but weep sometimes
when they remember Zion; but let not weeping hinder sowing, let them not sorrow as those that have no hope, no joy, for they have both. Note, In all conditions of life, it is our wisdom and duty to make the best of that which is, and not to throw away the comfort of what we may have, because we have not all we would have. We have a natural affection for our native country, it strangely draws our minds; but it is with the Lord, and he can give no good account of the sweet attraction; and therefore if Providence remove us to some other country, we must resolve to live there, to bring our mind to our condition, when our condition is not in every thing to our mind; if the earth be the Lord's, then, wherever a child of God goes, he does not go off his father's ground; Patria est ubique bene est. That place is our country in which we are well off. If things be not as they have been, instead of fretting at that, we must live in hopes that they will be better than they are.

Non si male nata, et olim sic erat.

Though we suffer now, we shall not always.

(2.) That they must not disquiet themselves with fears of intolerable hardships in their captivity. They might be ready to suggest (as persons in trouble are always apt to do) that it would be in vain to build houses, for their lords and masters would not suffer them to dwell in them when they had built them, nor to eat the fruit of the vineyards they planted; "Never fear," says God; "if you live peaceably with them, you shall find them civil to you." Meek and quiet people, that work, and mind their own business, have often found much better treatment, even with strangers and enemies, than they expected; and God has made his people to be fitted of those that carried them captive; (Ps. cxi. 40.) and pity it is, but that those who have built houses, should dwell in them. Nay,

4. He directs them to seek the good of the country where they were captives, (v. 7.) to prayer for it, to endeavour it. This forbids them to attempt any thing against the public peace, while they were subjects to the king of Babylon; though he was a heathen, an idolater, an oppressor, and an enemy to God and his church, yet, while he gave them protection, they must pay him allegiance; and live quiet and peaceable lives under him, in all godliness and honesty; not plotting to shake off his yoke, but patiently leaving it to God in due time to work deliverance for them. Nay, they must pray to God for the peace of the place where they were, that they might oblige them to continue their kindness to them, and disprove the character that had been given their nation, that they were hurtful to kings and provinces, and moved sedition, Ezra iv. 13. Bech the wisdom of the serpent, and the innocence of the dove, required them to be true to the government they lived under; for in the peace thereof ye shall have peace; should the country be embittered in war, they would have the greatest share in the calamitous effects of it. Thus the primitive Christians, according to the temper of their holy religion, prayed for the powers that were, though they were persecuting powers. And if they were to pray for, and seek the peace of, the land of their captivity, much more reason have we to pray for the welfare of the land of our birth. Let us rather pray that people under a good government, that in the peace thereof we and ours may have peace. Every passenger is concerned in the safety of the ship.

3. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. 9. For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name; I have not sent them, saith the Lord. 10. For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word towards you, in causing you to return to this place. 11. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. 12. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. 13. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. 14. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord; and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

To make the people quiet and easy in their captivity,

1. God takes them off from building upon the false bottom which their pretended prophets laid, v. 8, 9. They told them that their captivity should be short, and therefore that they must not think of taking root in Babylon, but be upon the wing to go back: "Now, herein, they deceive you," (says God,) "they prophesy a lie to you, though they prophesy in my name. But let them not deceive you, suffer not yourselves to be deluded by them." As long as we have the word of truth to try the spirits by, it is our own fault if we be deceived; for by it we may be undeceived. Hearken not to your dreams, which ye cause to be dreamed. He means either the dreams or fancies which the people pleased themselves with, and with which they filled their own heads; by thinking and speaking of nothing else but a speedy enlargement when they were awake, they caused themselves to dream of it when they were asleep, and then took that for a good omen, and with it strengthened themselves in their vain expectations; or, the dreams which the prophets dreamed, and grounded their prophecies upon. God tells the people, They are your dreams, because they pleased them, were the dreams that they desired and wished for; they caused them to be dreamed, for they hearkened to them, and encouraged the prophets to put such deceits upon them, desiring them to prophesy nothing but smooth things, Isa. xlix. 25. To be respected. False prophets would not flatter people in their sins, but that they love to be flattened, and speak smoothly to their prophets that their prophets may speak smoothly to them.

11. He gives them a good bottom to build their hopes upon. We would not persuade people to pull down the house they have built upon the sand, but that there is a rock made the steadfastness of them. God here promises them, that though they should not return quickly, they should return at length, after 70 years be accomplished. By this it appears, that the 70 years of the captivity are not to be reckoned from the last captivity, but the first. Note, Though the deliverance of the church do not come in our time, it is sufficient that it will come in God's time, and we are sure that that is the best time. The promise is, that God will visit them in
mercy; though he had long seemed to be strange to them, he will come among them, and appear for them, and put honour upon them, as great men do upon their inferiors, by coming to visit them. He will put an end to their captivity, and turn away all the calamities of it. Though they are dispersed, some in one country, and some in another, he will gather them from all the places whither they are driven, will set up a standard for them all to resort to, will give them the kingdom and glory again. Though they are at a great distance, they shall be brought again to their own land, to the place whence they were carried captive, v. 14.

Now, 1. This shall be the performance of God's promise to them; (v. 10.) I will perform my good word toward you. Let not the failing of those predictions which are delivered as from God, lessen the reputation of the soul of man. When we are sometimes ready to think that God's designs concerning us are all against us; but he knows the contrary concerning his own people, that they are thoughts of good, and not of evil; even that which seems evil, is designed for good. His thoughts are all working toward the expected end, which he will give in due time. The end they expect will come, though perhaps not when they expect it. Let them have patience till the fruit is ripe, and then they shall have it. He will give them an end, and expectation; so it is in the original. (1.) He will give them to see the end, the comfortable period, of their trouble; though it last long, it shall not last always; the time to favour Zion, yea, the set time, will come; when things are at the worst, they will begin to mend; and he will give them the perfecting of their deliverance; for, as for God, his work is perfect.

2. This shall be in his name, the performance of God's purposes concerning them; (v. 11.) I know the thoughts that I think toward you. Known unto God are all his works, for known unto him are all his thoughts. (Acts xv. 18.) and his works agree exactly with his thoughts: he doeth all according to the counsel of his will. We often do not know our own thoughts, nor know our own mind, but God is never at any uncertainty with himself: We are sometimes ready to fear that God's designs concerning us are all against us; but he knows the contrary concerning his own people, that they are thoughts of good, and not of evil; even that which seems evil, is designed for good. His thoughts are all working toward the expected end, which he will give in due time. The end they expect will come, though perhaps not when they expect it. Let them have patience till the fruit is ripe, and then they shall have it. He will give them an end, and expectation; so it is in the original. (1.) He will give them to see the end, the comfortable period, of their trouble; though it last long, it shall not last always; the time to favour Zion, yea, the set time, will come; when things are at the worst, they will begin to mend; and he will give them the perfecting of their deliverance; for, as for God, his work is perfect. He that in the beginning finished the heavens and the earth, and all the hosts of both, will finish all the blessings of both to his people. When he begins in ways of mercy, he will make an end. God does nothing by halves. (2.) He will give them to see the expectation, that end which they desire and hope for, and have been long waiting for. He will give them, not the mere sight of their fears, or the expectations of their fancies, but the expectations of their faith; the end which he has promised, and which will turn for the best to them.

3. This shall be in answer to their prayers and supplications to God, v. 12.—14. (1.) God will stir them up to pray; Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and prostrate, and he will hear you, and answer you. God will hear them to their prayer the expected good, he pours out a spirit of prayer, and it is a good sign that he is coming toward them in mercy. Then when you see the expected end approaching, then you shall call upon me. Note, Promises are given, not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, prayer; and when deliverance is coming, we must be nearer and nearer to meet it. When Israel understood that the 70 years were nearing to an end, he set his face with more fervency than ever to seek the Lord, Dan. ix. 2, 3. (2.) He will then stir up himself to come and save them, (Ps. lxxx. 2.) I will hearken unto you, and I will be found of you. God has said it, and we may depend upon it; seek, and ye shall find. We have a general rule laid down, (v. 13.) Ye shall find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. In seeking God, we must search for him, accomplish a diligent search, search for directions in seeking him, and encouragements to our faith and hope. We must continue seeking, and take pains in seeking, as he has but one heart; and this we must do with our heart, in sincerity and uprightness, and with our whole heart, with vigour and fervency, putting forth all that is within us, in prayer; those who thus seek God, shall find him, and shall find him their bountiful Rewarder, Heb. xi. 6. He never said to such, Seek ye me in vain.

15. Because ye have said, The Lord hath raised us up prophets in Babylon: 10. Know that thus saith the Lord of the king that sitteth upon the throne of David, and of all the people that dwell in this city, and of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity; 17. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. 18. And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and a hiss, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them: 19. Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the Lord, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the Lord. 20. Hear ye, therefore, the word of the Lord, all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon: 21. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, of Abah the son of Kohaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name, Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall slay them before your eyes; 22. And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The Lord make thee like Zedekiah, and like Abah, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire; 23. Because they have committed villany in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and am a witness, saith the Lord.

Jeremiah, having given great encouragement to those among the captives whom he knew to be serious and well-affected, assuring them that God had very kind and favourable intentions concerning them, here turns to those among them who slighted
the counselors and comforts that Jeremiah ministered to them, and depended upon what the false prophets flattered them with. When this letter came from Jeremiah, they would be ready to say, "Why should he make himself so busy, and take upon him to advise us? The Lord has raised us up prophets in Babylon, ch. 15. 15. We are satisfied with those prophets, and can depend upon them, and have no occasion to hear from any prophets in Jerusalem. See how they prosper, and how righteously this people are banished to Babylon by the hand of God. But as long as they remain there, the wickedness of this people; as the prophets, when they prophesied lies, said that they had them from God, so the people, when they invited those prophets thus to flatter them, fathered it upon God, and said that it was the Lord that raised them up those prophets. Whereas we may be sure that those who harden people in their sins, and deceive them with false and groundless hopes of God's mercy, are no prophets of God's raising up. These prophets of their own told them that no more should be carried captive, but that those who were in captivity should shortly return. Now, in answer to this,

1. The prophet here foretells the utter destruction of those who remained still at Jerusalem; notwithstanding what those false prophets said to the contrary. As the gates and palaces were burned down, (v. 17,) so, when you think, will you be ready to bid you welcome when you return, you are deceived, they shall be followed with one judgment after another, sword, famine, and pestilence; which shall cut off multitudes; and the poor and miserable remains shall be removed into all kingdoms of the earth," ch. 16. 18. And thus God will make them, or rather deal with them, like vile figs; they have made them selves so by their wickedness, and God will use them accordingly; as the salt that has lost its savour, which, being good for nothing, is cast to the dunghill; and so are rotten figs. This refers to the vision, and the prophecy on it, which we had, ch. xxiv. And the reason given for these proceedings against them, is the same that has often been given, and will justify God in the eternal ruin of impenitent sinners. (v. 19.) Because they have not hearkened to my words; I called, but they refused. 2. He foretells the judgment of God upon the false prophets in Babylon, who deceived the people of God there. He calls upon all the children of the captivity, who boasted of them as prophets of God's raising up; (v. 20.) "Stand still, and hear the doom of the prophets you are so fond of." The two prophets are named here, Ahab and Zedekiah, ch. 22. 15. Oh! you are charged upon them; if God's name, and immorality. They prophesied in God's name, (v. 21.) and again, (v. 23.) They have spoken lying words in my name. Lying was bad, lying to the people of God to delude them in a false hope was worse, but fathering their lies upon the God of truth was worst of all. And no marvel if they had the face to do it, could allow themselves to be so unrelenting to God, in a way of righteous judgment, gave them up. They have done villainy in Israel, for they have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives. Adultery is villany, and it is an aggravation of it, if it be villany in Israel, and in such as pretend to be prophets, who by such wickedness manifestly disprove their own pretensions. The prophet therefore proceeds to do what he calls a work, to scratch in the writings, the oracles of God. He is the Lord God of the holy prophets, not of all impure ones. Here it appears why they flattered others in their sins—because they could not reprove them without condemning themselves. These levish practices of theirs they knew how to conceal from the eye of the world, that they might preserve their credit; but I know it, and am a witness, says the Lord. The most secret sins are known to God; he can see the villany that is covered with the thickest cloak of hypocrisy, and there is a day coming when he will bring to light all these hidden works of darkness, and every man will appear in his own colours. (2.) The judgments threatened against them; The king of Babylon shall slay them before your eyes; nay, he shall put them to a miserable death, must them in the fire, v. 22. We may suppose that it was not for their impurity and immorality that Nebuchadnezzar punished them thus severely, but for provoking and stirring up their turbulent spirits upon the public peace, and stirring up the people to revolt and rebel. So much of their wickedness shall then be detected, and in such a wretched manner they shall end their days, that their names shall be a curse among the captives in Babylon, v. 22. When men would injure the greatest evil upon one they hated, they would think they could not load them with a heavier curse, in fewer words, than to say, The Lord make thee like Zedekia, and like Abi! Thus were they made ashamed of the prophets they had been proud of, and convinced at least of their folly in hearkening to them. God's faithful prophets were sometimes charged with being the troublers of the land, and, as such, were tortured and slain but their words were blessings when they were gone out, to make their memory sweet, not as these here. As malefactors are attended with infamy and disgrace, so martyrs with glory and honour.

24. Thus shalt thou also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelumite, saying, 25. Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou hast sent letters in the name unto all the people that are at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, and to all the priests, saying, 26. The Lord hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the Lord, for every man that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldst put him in prison, and in the stocks: 27. Now, therefore, why hast thou not reproved Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you? 28. For therefore he sent unto us in Babylon, saying, This captivity is long: build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them. 29. And Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet. 30. Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, 31. Send to all of them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the Lord concerning Shemaiah the Nehelumite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie; 32. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelumite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the Lord; because he hath taught rebellion against the Lord.
Jeremiah, xxix.

great deal of thanks to God and him, to acknowledge the receipt of it, and lay it up among their truth. If we cannot find the false prophets they had among them were enraged at it, for it gave them their true character. Now here we are told concerning one of them,

1. How he discovers his malice against Jeremiah. This base fellow is called Shelemiah the Nethin- city: the dreamer, (so the margin reads it,) because all his prophecies he pretended to have received from God, which makes it certain that at least a part of Shelemiah's letter to the captives, or had heard it read, or information was given to him concerning it, and it nettled him exceedingly; and he will take pen in hand, and answer it, yea, that he will. But how? He does not write to Jeremiah in justification of his own mission, nor offer any rational arguments for the support of his prophecies concerning the speedy return of the captives; but he writes to the priests, those faithful patrons of the false prophets, and instigates them to persecute Jeremiah. 

He writes in his own name, not so much as pretending to have the people's consent to it, but, as if he must be dictator to all mankind, he sends a circular letter (as it should seem) among the priests at Jerusalem, and the rest of the people, probably by the same means, as he had the letter from Jeremiah. But it is chiefly directed to Zephaniah, who was either the immediate son of Maasiah, or of the twenty-fourth course of the priests, of which Maasiah was the father and head. He was not the High Priest, but sagan or suffragan to the High Priest, or in some other considerable post of command in the temple service. Perhaps he was chairman of that committee of priests that was appointed in a particular manner to take cognizance of those that pretended to be prophets, of which there were very many at this time, and to give judgment concerning them. Now,

1. He puts him and the other priests in mind of the duty of their place; (v. 26.) The Lord hath made thee priest instead of Jehoiada the priest. Some think that he refers to the famous Jehoiada, that great reformer in the days of Josiah; and (says Mr. Gataker) he would insinuate that this Zephaniah is for spirit and zeal such another as he, and raised up, as he was, for the glory of God and the good of the church; and therefore it was expected from him that he should proceed against Jeremiah. 'They are the most dangerous enemies of the church, that wicked wretches and false prophets will not only attempt it, but colour it also with some special pretence of piety, and zeal for God's glory,

2. But Jeremiah was not at all used to this sort of opposition; he was not afraid of them, and he would not suffer them to have power, or, rather, abuse it. Their hearts are wickedly hard, who can justify the doing of mischi- vous lies: their hate to this place of trust and power, and Shelemiah would have him think that Providence had preferred him, that he might persecute God's prophets, that he was come to this government for such a time as this, and that he was unjust and ungrateful, if he did not thus improve his power, or, rather, abuse it. Their hearts are wickedly hard, who can justify the doing of mischief. 

2. He infers from the letter he had from the priests, that there was no such innocuous power, and that the priests' business was to examine every man that is mad, and makes himself a prophet. God's faithful prophets are here represented as prophets of their own making, usurpers of the office, and lay-intruders: and as men that were mad, actuated by some demon, and not divinely inspired; or as distracted men, and men in a frenzy. Thus the characters of the priests of the false prophets are given, and it is probable, if this had been indeed their character, they ought to be bound as madmen and punished as pretenders, and therefore he concludes that Jeremiah must be so done to. He does not bid them examine whether Jeremiah could produce any proofs of his mission, nor could one see any miracle in what he did; no, that is taken for granted, and when once he has had a bad name given him, he must be run down of course.

2. He informs them of the letter which Jeremiah had written to the captives; (v. 28.) He sent unto us in Babylon, with the authority of a prophet, saying, This captivity is long, and therefore resolve to make the best of it. That was there in this, that it should be objected to him as a crime? The false prophets had formerly said that the captivity would never come, ch. xiv. 13. Jeremiah had said that it would come, and the event had already proved him in the right, which obliged them to give credit to him, who now said that it would be long, rather than to them who said it would be short, but had once before been found liars.

3. He demands judgment against him; taking it for granted that he is mad, and makes himself a prophet. He expects that they will order him to be put in prison, and in the stocks, (v. 26.) that they will thus punish him, and by putting him to disgrace possess the people with prejudices against him, ruin his reputation, and so prevent the giving of any credit to his prophecies at Jerusalem, hoping that if they could gain that point, the captives in Babylon would not be influenced by him. Nay, he takes upon him to chide Zephaniah for his neglect, (v. 27.) Why had thou not rebuked and restrained Jeremiah of Anathoth? See how insolent and impious these false prophets were grown, that though they were in captivity, they would give law to the priests, who were not only at liberty but in power. It is common for those that pretend to more knowledge than their neighbours, to be thus assuming. Now here is a remarkable instance of the hardness of the hearts of sinners, and it is enough to make us all fear, lest our hearts be at any time hardened. For here we find, (1.) That these sinners would not be convinced by the clearest evidence. God had confirmed his word in the mouth of Jeremiah, it had taken hold of them; (Zech. i. 6.) and yet, because he does not prophesy to them the smooth things they desired, they are resolved to look upon him as not duly called to the office of a prophet. None so blind as those that will not see. (2.) That they would not be reclaimed and reformed by the threat of punishment. They were now sent into a miserable thrall for making the passen- gers of the Lord, and misusing his prophets; this was the sin for which God now contended with them; and yet in their distress they trespass yet more against the Lord, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. This very sin they are notoriously guilty of in their captivity, which shows that afflictions will not of themselves cure men of their sinfulness; as grace does, God work with them, but will rather exact from the actions they are intended to mortify: so true is that adage of Solomon, (Prov. xxvii. 22.) Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.

11. How Jeremiah came to the knowledge of this; (v. 29.) Zephaniah read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah. Here it is remarkable that Shelemiah would have him, but, as it should seem, had respect for Jeremiah, (for we find him employed in messages to him as a prophet, ch. xxi. 1—xxvii.) and therefore protected him. He that continued in his dignity and power, stood more in awe of God and his judgments than he that was now a captive. Nay, he made Jeremiah acquainted with the contents of this letter. He that must have seen what enmity he had even among the captives. Note, It is kindness to our friends, to let them know their foes.

11. What was the sentence passed upon She-
manah for writing this letter. God sent him an answer, for to him Jeremiah committed his cause: it was ordered to be sent not to him, but to them of the captivity, who encouraged and countenanced him, as if he had been a prophet of God's raising up, v. 31, 32. Let them know, 

1. That Shemaiah had made fools of them; he persuaded the people in God's name, but God did not send him, he forged a commission, and counterfeited the broad seal of Heaven to it, and made the people to trust in a lie, and by preaching false comfort to them deprived them of true comfort; nay, he had not only made fools of them, but, which was worse, had made traitors of them, he had taught rebellion against the Lord, as Hana- niah had done, ch. xxvii. 18. And if rebellion shall be taken on them that rebel, much more on them that teach rebellion by their doctrine and example. 

2. That at his end he shall also be a fool; (as the expression is, ch. xvii. 11.) his name and family shall be extinct, and shall be buried in oblivion; he shall leave no issue behind him to bear up his name, his pedigree shall end in him; he shall not have a memory left to his posterity, nor any that come from him, shall behold the good that I will do for my people. Note, Those are unworthy to share in God's favours to his church, that are not willing to stay his time for them. Shemaiah was angry at Jeremiah's advice to the captives, to see to the building up of their families in Babylon, that they might be increased, and might become a comfort and joy to the Lord, and to the children that are written childless there. Those that slight the blessings of God's word, deserve to lose the benefit of them. See Amos vii. 16. 17.

CHAP. XXX.

The sermon which we have in this, and the following chapter, is of a very different complexion from all those before. The prophet does indeed, by direction from God, change his voice. Most of what he had said hitherto, was by way of reproof and threatening; but these two chapters are wholly taken up with precious promises of a return out of captivity, and that typical of the glorious things reserved for the church in the days of the Messiah. The prophet is here not only to preach this, but to write it, because it is in and for the comfort of the generation to come, v. 1. 3. It is here promised, 1. That they should hereafter have a joyful restoration. 1. Though they were now in a great deal of pain and terror, and in the utmost distress, and had scattered among nations, and there they had not prospered, and their posterity was weak, v. 8. 10. Though a full end was made of other nations, and they were not restored, v. 11. 4. Though all means of their deliverance seemed to fail and be off, v. 12., 14. 5. Though God himself had set them into captivity, and justly, for their sins, v. 15. 16. 6. Though all about them looked upon their case as desperate, v. 17. 11. That after their joyful restoration they should have a happy settlement; that their city should be rebuilt, (v. 16.) their numbers increased, (v. 19, 20.) their government established, (v. 21.) God's covenant with them renewed, (v. 22.) and their enemies destroyed and cut off, v. 23. 24. 1.

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 2. Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book. 3. For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. 4. And these are the words that the Lord spake concerning Israel, and concerning Judah. 5. For thus

sait the Lord, We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. 6. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? 7. Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. 3 For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: 9. But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

Here, I. Jeremiah is directed to write what God had spoken to him; which perhaps refers to all the foregoing prophecies; he must write them and publish them, in hopes that they who had not profited by it upon once hearing it, might take more notice of it when, in reading it, they had leisure for a more considerate review. Or, rather, it refers to the promises of their enlargement, which had been often mixed with his other discourses. He must collect them and put them together, and God will and add unto them many like words. He must write them for the generations to come, who should see them accomplished, and thereby have their faith in the prophecy confirmed. He must write it not in a letter, as some have supposed, but in a book, to be carefully preserved in the archives, or among the public rolls or registers of the state. Daniel understood by these books when the captivity was about coming to an end, Dan. ix. 2. He must write it in a book, not in loose papers; For the days come, and are yet at a great distance, when I will bring again the captivity of Israel and Judah, the great numbers of the ten tribes, with those of the two, v. 3. And it must be written, that it may be read then also, that so it may appear how exactly the accomplishment answers the prediction, which is one end of the writing of prophecies. It is intimated that they shall be beloved for their fathers' sakes; (Rom. xi. 28.) for therefore God will bring them again to Canaan, because it was the land that he gave to their fathers, which therefore they shall possess. II. He is directed what to write. The very words are such as the Holy Ghost teaches, v. 4. These are the words which God ordered to be written; and those promises which are written by his order, are as truly his word as the ten commandments, which were written with his finger. 3. He must write a description of the light and consternation which the people were now in, and were likely to be still in upon every attack that the Chaldeans made upon them, which will much magnify both the wonder and the wellcomeness of their deliverance; (v. 5.) We have heard a voice of trembling—the shrieks of terror echoing to the alarms of danger. The false prophets told them that they should have peace, but there was no fear, and not peace; so the margin reads it. No marvel that when without are fightings, within are fears. The men, even the men of war, shall be quite overwhelmed with the calamities of their nation, shall sink under them, and yield to them, and shall look like women in labour, whose pains come upon them in great extremity, and they know that they cannot escape them, v. 6. You never heard of a man tra-
vailing with child, and yet here you find not here and there a timorous man, but every man, with his hands on his loins, in the utmost anguish and agony, as women in travail, when they see their cities burnt and their countries laid waste. But this pain is compared to that of a woman in travail, not to that of a death-bed, because it shall end in joy at last, and the pain, like that of a travailing woman, shall be forgotten. All faces shall be turned into gladness. The word signifies not only such painless as arise from a sudden fright, but that which is the effect of old age and decay. And this is the great and terrible day of the Lord, v. 11.}

{v. 12.} But there shall be none like it. The last destruction of Jerusalem is thus spoken of by our Saviour as unparalleled, Matt. xxiv. 21. It is even the time of Jacob's trouble, a sad time, when God's professing people shall be in distress, above other people. The whole time of the captivity was a time of Jacob's trouble; and such times ought to be greatly lamented by all that are concerned for the welfare of Jacob, and the honour of the God of Jacob.

He must with these assurances which God had given, that a happy end should at length be put to these calamities, (1.) Jacob's troubles shall cease; He shall be saved out of them. Though the afflictions of the church may last long, they shall not last always. Salvation belongs to the Lord, and shall be wrought for his church. (2.) Jacob's troubles shall be disabled to do him any further mischief, and shall be reckoned with for the mischief they have done him, v. 1. The Lord of hosts, who has all power in his hand, undertakes to do it; I will break his yoke from off thy neck, which has long lain so heavy, and hath so sorely galled thee; I will burst thy bonds and restore thee to liberty and ease, and thou shalt no more be at the beck and command of strangers, shalt no more serve them, nor shall they any more serve themselves of thee, they shall no more enrich themselves either by thy possessions or by thy labours. And, (3.) That which crowns and completes the mercy is, that they shall be restored to the free exercise of their religion again, v. 9. They shall be delivered from serving their enemies, not that they may live at large, and do what they please; but that they may serve the Lord their God, and be delivered from their king, and their enemies, and come again in order, under the established government both in church and state. Therefore they are brought into trouble and made to serve their enemies, because they had not served the Lord their God as they ought to have done, with joyfulness and gladness of heart, Deut. xxxviii. 47. But when the time is come that the Lord shall be magnified, and his enemies be delivered out of the hands of our enemies, that we may serve God, Luke i. 74, 75. And their deliverances out of temporal calamities are mercies indeed to us, when like him we come that time, and may serve God, and engage in the service of God. They shall serve their own God, and neither be inclined, as they had been of old in the day of their apostacy, nor compelled, as they had been of late in the day of their captivity, to serve other gods. They shall serve David their king, such governors as God should from time to time appoint over the line of the house of David, and of the house of Jacob; or, at least, the throne of Judah, the throne of the house of David, as Nebuchadnezzar. But certainly this has a further meaning. The Chaldee Paraphrase reads it, They shall obey, or hearken to, the Messiah, or Christ, the Son of David, their king. To him the Jewish interpreters apply it. That dispensation, which commenced at their return out of captivity, brought them to the Messiah. He is called David their king, because he was the Son of David, (Matt. xxii. 42.) and he answered to the name. Matt. xx. 31, 32. David was an illustrious type of him both in his humiliation and his exaltation. The covenant of royalty made with David had principal reference to him, and in him the promises of that covenant had their full accomplishment. God gave him the throne of his father David, he raised him up unto them, set him upon the holy hill of Zion. God is often in the New Testament said to have raised up Jesus, raised him up as a King, Acts iii. 26.—xxiii. 23, 33. Observe, [1.] Those that serve the Lord as their God, must also serve David their King, must give up themselves to Jesus Christ, to be ruled by him. For all men must honour the Son as they honour the Father, and come into the service and worship of God by him as Mediator. [2.] Those that are delivered out of spiritual bondage, must make it appear that they are so by giving up themselves to the service of Christ. They to whom he gives rest, must take his yoke upon them.

10. Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. 11. For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished. 12. For thus saith the Lord, Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous. 13. There is none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up: thou hast no healing medicines. 14. All thy lovers have forgotten thee; they seek thee not: for I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased. 15. Why criest thou for thine affliction? thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: because thy sins were increased I have done these things unto thee. 16. Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey. 17. For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after.

In these verses, as in those foregoing, the deplorable case of the Jews in captivity is set forth, but many precious promises are given them, that in due time they should be relieved, and a glorious salvation wrought for them.
1. God himself appeared against them; he scattered them; (v. 11) he did *all these things unto* them, v. 15. All their calamities came from his hands; whoever were the instruments, he was the principal Agent. And this made their case very sad, that God, even their own God, spake concerning them, to pull down and to destroy. Now, (1.) This was intended by the very manner of the words; (v. 11.) "I will correct thee in measure, according to judgment, with discretion, no more than thou deservest, nay, no more than thou canst well bear." What God does against his people, is in a way of correction, and that correction is always moderated, and always proceeds from love. "I will not leave thee altogether unfruitful, as thou art ready; this shall be a fifth to thee." Note, A profession of religion, though ever so plausible, will be far from securing us impunity in sin. God is no respecter of persons, but will show his hatred of sin, wherever he finds it, and that he hates it most in those that are nearest to him. God here corrects his people for the multitude of their iniquity, and because their sins were increased, v. 14, 15. (2.) It was not that he had increased their ruin, and neither mitigated the correction, nor had any mercy in reserve for them. It did indeed seem as if God had dealt thus severely with them, as if he had turned to be their Enemy, and had fought against them, Isa. lxxiii. 10. Job complains that God was become cruel to him, and multiplied his wounds. When troubles are great and long, we have need carefully to watch over our own hearts, that we entertain not such hard thoughts as these of God and his providence. His are the chastisements of a merciful one, not of a cruel one, however they may appear.

2. Their friends forsook them, and were shy of them; none of those who had counted them in their prosperity, would take notice of them now in their distress. It was worthy of notice, that the very street, those hang from off them, that had been their hangers-on. In two cases we are glad of the assistance of our friends, and need their service; (1.) If we be impeached, accused, or reproached, we expect that our friends should appear in vindication of us, should speak a good word for us, when we cannot put on a face to speak for ourselves; but here there is none to plead our cause, none to stand up in our behalf, nor to intercede for thee with thy oppressors; therefore God will plead their cause, for he might well wonder there was none to uphold a people that had been so much the favourites of heaven, Isa. lxxiii. 5. (2.) If we be sick, or sore, or wounded, we expect our friends should attend us, advise us, sympathize with us, and, if need be, lend a hand for us. God is a fatherly, though natural father; but here, there is none to do that, none to bind up thy wounds, and by counsels and comforts to make proper applications to thy case; nay, (v. 14.) *All thy lovers have forgotten thee;* out of sight out of mind; instead of seeking thee they forsake thee. Such as this has often been the case of religion and serious godliness in the world; those, that from their education and habits of life, had natural friends, one might have expected had been his friends and lovers, its patrons and protectors, desert it, forget it, and have nothing to say in its defence, nor will do any thing toward the healing of its wounds. *Observe, Thy lovers have forgotten thee, for I have wounded thee." When God is against a people, who will be for them? Who can be for them, so as to do them any kindness? See Job xxx. 11. Now, upon this account, their case seemed desperate and past relief; (v. 12.) *Thy brute is in trouble, thy griefs are many, and thy sorrow is incurable;* the condition of those in captivity was such as no human power could redress the grievances of; there they were like a valley full of dead and dry bones, which nothing less than Omnipotence can put life into. Who could imagine that a people so diminished, so impoverished, should ever be restored to their own land, and established there? So many were the aggravations of their calamity, that their sorrow would admit of no alleviation, but they seemed to be hardening in it, and their souls refused to be comforted, till divine consolations proved strong ones, too strong to be borne down even by the floods of grief that overwhelmed them. *Thy sorrow is incurable, because thy sins, instead of being repented of and forgotten, were increased.* Note, Incurable griefs are not to be remedied by repentance of them, when condition they are looked upon with disdain; (v. 17.) *They called thee an outcast, abandoned by all, abandoned to ruin; they said, This is Zion, whom no man seeks after.* When they looked on the place where the city and temple had been built, they called that an outcast; now all was in ruins, there was no resort to it, no residence in it, none asked the way to it, no man seeks after it. When they looked on the people that formerly dwelt in Zion, but were now in captivity, (and we read of Zion dwelling with the daughter of Babylon, Zech. ii. 7.) they called them outcasts; these are they who belong to Zion, and talk much of it, and weep at the remembrance of it, but no man seeks after them, or inquires concerning them. Note, It is often the lot of Zion to be deserted and despised by those about her.

3. For all this, God will work deliverance and salvation for them in due time. Though no other hand, may, because no other hand, can cure their wound, his will and shall. (1.) Though he seemed to stand at a distance from them, yet he assures them of his presence with them, his powerful and gracious presences, and his presence with me, which is the same thing with the presence of God. Hence God says, *I will make my dew to fall in due season; I will bless the increase of the earth; I will cause the rain to descend in due season; the earth shall deliver up the increase thereof;* (v. 11.) When they are in their troubles, he is with them, to save them from sinking under them; when the time is come for their deliverance, he is with them, to be ready upon the first opportunity, to save them out of their trouble. (2.) Though they were at a distance, remote from their own land, afar off in the land of their captivity, yet there shall salvation find them out; hence shall it fetch them, and their seed, for they also shall be known among the Gentiles, and distinguished from them, that they may return, v. 10. (3.) Though they were now full of tears, and continually alarmed, yet the time shall come when they shall be in rest and quiet, safe and easy, and none shall make them afraid, v. 10. (4.) Though the nations thereof shall be utterly dispersed, then shall they be brought to ruin, yet they shall be preserved from that ruin; (v. 11.) Though I make a full end of the nations whither I have scattered thee, and there might be danger of thy being lost among them, yet I will not make a full end of thee. It was promised that in the peace of these nations they should have peace; (ch. xxix. 7.) and yet in the destruction of the wicked nations they should escape. God's church may sometimes be brought very low, but he will not make a full end of it, ch. v. 10. 18. (5.) Though God correct them, and justly, for their sins, their manifold transgres-
sions and mighty sins, yet he will return in mercy to them, and even their sin shall not prevent their deliverance when God's time is come. (6.) Though their adversities were mighty, God will bring them down, and break their power; (v. 16.) All that devour thee shall be devoured, and thus Zion's cause will be pleaded, and will be made to appear to all the world a righteous cause. Thus Zion's deliverance will be brought about by the destruction of her oppressors; the remnant will be exalted, and the inhabitants will be recompensed for all the injury they have done her: for there is a God that judges in the earth, a God to whom vengeance belongs; they shall every one of them, without exception, go into captivity, and the day will come when they that now spoil thee, shall be a spoil; they that lead into captivity, shall go into captivity, Rev. xiii. 10. This might serve to oblige the present conquerors to use their captives well, because the wheel would turn round, and the day would come when they also should be captives, and let them do now as they would then be done by. (7.) Though the wound would seem incurable, God will make a cure of it; (v. 17.) I will restore health unto thee. Be the disease ever so dangerous, the patient is safe if God undertake the cure.

(8.) Upon the whole matter, they are cautioned against histrionic and grief, for in these precious promises there is enough to silence both: (1.) They must not tremble as those that have no hope, in the apprehension of future further trouble that might threaten them; (v. 10.) Fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, neither be dismayed. Note, Those that are God's servants must not give way to disquieting fears, whatever difficulties and dangers may be before them. (2.) They must not sorrow as those that have no hope, for the troubles which at present they lie under, v. 15. "Why criest thou for thine affliction?" It is true, thy carnal confidences fail thee, the cries of physicians of no value, but I will heal thy wound, and therefore, Why criest thou? Why dost thou fret and complain thus? It is for thy sins, (v. 14, 15.) and therefore, instead of repining, thou shouldst repent. Wherefore should a man complain for the punishment of his sins? The issue will be good at last, and therefore rejoice in hope."  

18. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling-places; and the city shall be built upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. 19. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. 20. Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them. 21. And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord. 22. And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. 23. Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind; it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. 24. The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it.

We have here further intimations of the favour God had in reserve for them after the days of their captivity: It is peculiar.

1. That the city and temple should be rebuilt, (v. 18.) Jacob's tents, and his dwelling-places, felt the effects of the captivity, for they lay in ruins when the inhabitants were carried away captives: but when they are returned, the habitations shall be repaired, and raised up out of their ruins, and therein God will have mercy upon their dwelling-places, that had been monuments of his justice. Then the temple of Jerusalem shall be built upon her own heap, her own hill, though now it be no better than a ruinous heap. The situation was unexceptionable, and therefore it shall be rebuilt upon the same spot of ground. He that can make of a city a heap, (Isa. xxx. 2.) can, when he pleases, make of a heap a city again. The palace, the temple, God's palace shall remain over the manner thereof, it shall be built after the old model; and the service of God shall be constantly kept up there, and attended as formerly.

2. That the sacred feasts should again be solemnized; (v. 19.) Out of the city, and the temple, and all the dwelling-places of Jacob, shall proceed thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry. They shall go with expressions of joy to the temple-service, and with the like shall return from it. Observe, The voice of thanksgiving is the same with the voice of them that make merry; for whatever is the matter of our joy, should be the matter of our praise. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms. What makes us cheerful should make us thankful. Serve the Lord with gladness.

3. That the people should be multiplied and increased, and made considerable; They shall not be few, they shall not be small, but shall become numerous and illustrious, and make a figure among the nations; for I will multiply them and I will glorify them. It is for the honour of the church to have many added to it, that shall be saved; this would make them to be of some weight among their neighbours. Let a people be ever so much diminished and despised, God can multiply and glorify them. They shall be restored to their former honour, their children shall be as aforetime, playing in the streets; (Zech. viii. 5.) they shall inherit their parents' estates and honours as formerly, and their congregations shall, both in civil and sacred things, be established before me. There shall be a constant succession of faithful magistrates in the congregation of the elders, to establish that, and of faithful worshippers in the congregation of the saints. As one generation passes away, another shall be raised up, and so the congregation shall be established before God.

4. That they shall be blessed with a good government; (v. 21.) Their nobles and judges shall be of themselves, of their own nation, and they shall no longer be rule by strangers and enemies; their governor shall proceed from the midst of them, shall be one that has been a shaver with them in the afflictions of their captive state; and this has reference to Christ our Governor, David our King; (v. 9.) he is of ourselves, in all things made like unto his brethren. And I will cause them to draw near: they shall not be few, neither be despised, neither be abased: Of the house of Jacob and Israel: "I will cause them to draw near to me in the temple-service, as formerly, to come into covenant with me, as my people, (v. 22.) to approach to me in communion; for, who hath engaged
his heart, made a covenant with it, and brought it into bonds, to approach unto me?" How few are there that do so! None can do it but by the special grace of God, causing them to draw near. Note, Whenever we appear to God, in any holy ordi- nance, we must engage our hearts to do it; the heart must be prepared for the duty, employed in it, and kept close to it. The heart is the main thing that God looks at and requires; but it is deceitful, and will start aside, if a great deal of care and pains be not taken to engage it to bind this sacrifice with cords.

Or, (2.) It may be understood of the gover- nor, for it is a single person that is spoken of; their governor specially called for office, to draw near to God to consult him upon all occasions. God will cause him to approach to him, for other- wise, who would engage to take care of so weak a people, and let this ruin come under their hand? But when God has work to do, though attended with many discouragements, he will raise up in- struments to do it. But it looks further, to Christ, to him as Mediator. Note, [1.] The proper work and office of Christ, as Mediator, is to draw near and approach unto God, not for himself only, but for us, and in our name and stead, as the High Priest of our profession. The priests are said to draw nigh to God, Lev. x. 3.—xxi. 17. Moses drew near, Exod. xx. 21. [2.] God the Father did cause Jesus Christ thus to draw near and ap- proach to him, as Mediator. He commanded, and appointed him to do it, he sanctified and sealed him, anointed him for this purpose, and accepted of him, and declared himself well-pleased in him. [3.] Je- sus Christ, being caused by the Father to approach unto him as Mediator, did engage his heart to do it, he bound and obliged himself to it, undertook for his heart, (so some read it,) for his soul, that, in the fulness of time, it should be made an offering for sin. His own voluntary election, in engaging himself as his Father's will, and in compassion to fallen man, engaged him, and then his own honour kept him to it. It also intimates that he was hearty and reso- lute, free and cheerful, in it, and made nothing of the difficulties that lay in his way, Isa. lxxiii. 3.— 5. [4.] Jesus Christ was, in all this, truly wonder- ful; we may well ask, with admiration, Who is this that engageth his heart to such an undertaking? [5.] That they shall be taken again into covenant with God, according to the covenant made with their fathers; (ver. 22.) Ye shall be my people, and it is God's good work in us, that makes us to him a people, a people for his name, Acts xv. 14. I will be your God; it is his good-will to us, that is the summary of that part of the covenant.

6. That their enemies shall be reckoned with and brought down; (ver. 20.) I will punish all them that oppress them, so that it shall appear to all a danger- ous thing to touch God's anointed, Ps. cv. 15. The two last verses come under this head. The whirl- wind of the Lord shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. These two verses we had be- fore: (ch. xxiii. 19, 20.) there they were a denun- ciation of God's wrath against the wicked hypocrites in Israel; here, against the wicked oppressors of Israel; the expressions, exactly agreeing, speak the same with that, (Isa. li. 22, 25.) I will take the cup of trembling out of thy hand, and put it into the hand of them that afflict thee. The wrath of God against the wicked is here represented to be, (1.) Very terrible, like a whirlwind, surprising and irre- sistible. (2.) Very grievous; it shall fall with pain upon them, they shall be made much more afraid. (3.) It shall pursue them; whirlwinds are usually short, but this shall be a continuing whirlwind. (4.) It shall accomplish that for which it is sent; The anger of the Lord shall not return, till he have done it; the purposes of his wrath, as well as the purposes of his love, will all be fulfilled; he will perform the intents of his heart; and, (5.) Those that will not lay this to heart now, will then be unable to put off the thoughts of it; In the latter days we shall consider it, when it will be too late to prevent it.

CHAP. XXXI.

This chapter goes on with the good words and comfort- able words which we had in the chapter before, for the encouragement of the captives, assuring them that God would in due time return them or their children, to their own land, and make them a great and happy nation again, especially by sending them the Messiah, who should reign with authority, and to whom and kingdom and grace many of these promises were to have their full accomplishment. 1. They shall be restored to peace and honour, and joy and great plenty, v. 1.—14. Their sorrow for the loss of their children shall be at an end, v. 15.—17. III. They shall repent of their sins, and God will graciously accept them in their repentance, v. 18.—26. IV. They shall be multiplied and in- creased, both their children and their cattle, and not be cut off and diminished as they had been, v. 21.—30. V. God will renew his covenant with them, and enrich it with spiritual blessings, v. 31.—34. VI. These blessings shall be secured to their heirs after them, even to the spiritual seed of Israel for ever, v. 35.—37. VII. As an earnest of this, the city of Jerusalem shall be rebuilt, v. 38.—40. These exceeding great and precious promises were firm foundations of hope, and full foundations of joy, to the poor captives, and God will also make them apply to ourselves, and mix faith with them.

1. At the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. 2. Thus saith the Lord, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. 3. The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; there- fore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee. 4. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry. 5. Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the moun- tains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things. 6. For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God. 7. For thus saith the Lord, Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O Lord, save thy people, the remnant of Israel. 8. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return. 9. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born
God here assures his people,
1. That he will again take them into a covenant-
ratiO n, within一切都是 from which they seemed to have been cut off. *At the same time,* when God's anger breaks out against the wicked, (ch. xxx. 24.) his own people shall be owned by him as the children of his love; I will be the God, I will show myself to be the God, of all the families of Israel; (v. 1.) not only of Aaron himself, but of the family of Aaron only, and the families of Levi, but of all of their families; not only their state in general, but their particular families, and the interests of them, shall have the benefit of a special relation to God. Note, The families of good people, in their family-capacity, may apply themselves to God, and stay themselves upon him as their God. If we and our houses serve the Lord, we and our houses shall be protected and blessed by him, Prov. iii. 33.

2. That "he will do for them, in bringing them out of Babylon, as he had done for their fathers when he delivered them out of Egypt, and as he had purposed to do when he first took them to be his people. (1.) He puts them in mind of what he did for their fathers; it was a "people left of the sword, that sword of Pharaoh, with which he cut off all the male children as soon as they were born, (a bloody sword indeed they had narrowly escaped,) and that sword with which he threatened to cut them off when he pursued them to the Red Sea. They were then in the wilderness, a place where they seemed to be lost and forgotten; they were driven, now in a strange land, and yet they found grace in God's sight, were owned and highly honoured by him, and blessed with wonderful instances of his peculiar favour, and he was at this time going to cause them to rest in Canaan. Note, When we are brought very low, and insuperable difficulties appear in the way of our deliverance, it is good to remember that it has been so with the church formerly, and yet that it has been raised up from its low estate, and has got to Canaan through all the hardships of a wilderness; and God is still the same. (2.) They put him in mind of what God had done for their fathers, intimating that they now saw not such signs, and were ready to ask, as Gideon did, *Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of? (Judg. vii. 9.) Where is the Lord, that brought us up out of old unto me, in Egypt, in the wilderness, hath appeared with me, and for me, hath been seen in his glory as my God; the years of ancient times were glorious years; but now it is otherwise; what good will it do us, that he appeared of old to us, when now he is a God that hides himself from us?* Isa. xlv. 15. Note, It is hard to take comfort from former smiles, under present frowns. (3.) To this he answers, with an assurance of the constancy of his love, Yea, I have loved thee, not only with an ancient love, but with an everlasting love, a love that shall never fail, however the comforts of it may for a time be suspended. It is an everlasting love, therefore have I extended or drawn out loving-kindness unto thee also, as well as to thine ancestors; or, withholding-kindness have I drawn to myself as thy God, from all the idols to which thou hadst turned aside. Note, It is the happiness of those who are through grace interested in the love of God, that it is an everlasting love, (from everlasting in the counsels of it, to everlasting in the continuance and consequences of it,) and that nothing can separate them from that love. Those who love God with love, love all the more into covenant and communion with himself, by the influences of his Spirit upon their souls; he will draw them with loving-kindness, with the cords of a man, and bands of love, than which no attractive can be more powerful.

3. That he will again form them into a people, and give them a very joyful settlement in their own land, v. 4. 5. The church of God his house, his temple? Is it now in ruins? It is so; but, *Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built.* Aye the parts of this building dispersed! They shall be collected, and brought together into one place. If God undertake to build them, they shall be built, whatever opposition may be given to it. Is Israel a beautiful virgin? Is she now stripped of her ornaments, and reduced to a melancholy state? She is so; but thou shalt again adorn her, and make her beautiful with all the graces, and adorn her with thy tabrets, or timbrels, the ornaments of thy chamber, and make merry. They shall resume their harps which have been laid upon the willow trees, shall tune them, and shall themselves be in tune to make use of them; they shall be adorned with their tabrets, for now their mirth and music shall be seasonable, it shall be a proper time for it, God in his providence shall call them to it, and then it shall be an ornament to them; whereas, as tabrets, at a time of common calamity, when dead and collected, and heavy smells, were a shame to them. Or, it may refer to their use of tabrets in solemnizing of their religious feasts, and their going forth in dances then, as the daughters of Shiloh, Judg. xxi. 19, 21. Our mirth is then indeed an ornament to us, when we serve God and honour him with it. Is the joy of the city maintained by the products of the country? It is so; and therefore it shall be increased, v. (v. 5.) Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria, which had been the head city of the kingdom of Israel, in opposition to that of Judah; but they shall now be united, (Ezek. xxxvii. 22.) and there shall be such perfect peace and security, that they shall apply themselves wholly to the improvement of their ground; the planters shall plant, not fearing the soldiers' coming to eat the fruits of what they had planted, or to pluck it up; but they themselves shall eat them freely, as common things, not forbidden fruits, not forbidden by the law of God, (as they were till the fifth year, Lev. xix. 23—25.) not forbidden by the owners, because there shall be such plenty as to yield enough for all, for each.

4. That they shall have liberty and opportunity to "worship God, in the ordinances of their country, and shall have both the institutions and inclinations to do so; (v. 6.) There shall be a day, and a glorious day it will be when, the watchmen upon mount Ephraim, that are set to stand sentinel there, to give notice of the approach of the enemy, finding that all is very quiet, and that there is no appearance of danger, shall desire for a time to be charged from their post, that they may go up to Zion, to praise God for the public peace. Or, the watchmen that tend the vineyards, spoken of, v. 5. shall stir up themselves, and one another, and all their neighbours, to go, and keep the solemn feast at Jerusalem. Now this implies that the service of God shall be again set up in Zion, that there shall be a general resort to it, with much affection and mutual excitement, as in David's time, Ps. cxviii. But that which is most observable here is, that the watchmen of Ephraim are forward to promote the worship of God at Jerusalem, whereas formerly the watchman of Ephraim was hatred against the house of his God, (Hos. ix. 8.) and, instead of inviting people to Zion, laid snares for those that set their faces thitherward, Hos. v. 1. Note, God can sanctify those that are his enemies to religion, and the true worship of God, to his enemies; he can turn them, and leaders in them. This promise was to have its full accomplishment in the days of the
Jeremiah, when the gospel should be preached to all these countries, and a general invitation here-by given into the church of Christ, of which Zion was a type.

5. That God shall have the glory, and the church both the honour and comfort, of this blessed change; (v. 7.) Singing, we have gladness for Jacob, let all her friends and well-wishers rejoice with her, Deut. xxxiii. 43. Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people, Rom. xv. 10. The restoration of Jacob will be taken notice of by all the neighbours, it will be matter of joy to them all, and they shall all join with Ja-cob in his joys, and thereby pay him respect, and put a reputation upon him. Even the Gentiles, that made the greatest figure, shall think it their duty to come to them to congratulate the restoration of Jacob, and shall do themselves the honour to send their ambassadors on that errand. Publish ye, praise ye; in publishing these tidings, praise the God of Israel, praise the Israel of God, speak honourably of both. The publishers of the gospel must do it with praise, and therefore it is often spoken of in the Psalms, as mingled with praises, Ps. lxvii. 2, 5. What we either bring to others, or take to ourselves the comfort of, we must be sure to give God the praise of. Praise ye, and say, O Lord, save thy people; perfect their salvation, go on to save the remnant of Israel, that are yet in bondage; as Ps. cxxxvi. 3, 4. Note, When we are praising God for what he has done, we must call upon him for the future favours: He that has been lavish of his grace in the present is in need and expectation of: and in praising to him we are really praise him, and give him glory; he takes it so.

6. That, in order to a happy settlement in their own land, they shall have a joyful return out of the land of their captivity, and a very comfortable passage homeward, (v. 8, 9.) and this beginning of mercy shall be to them a pledge of all the other blessings here promised. (1.) Though they are scattered to places for remote, yet they shall be brought together from the north country, and from the coasts of the earth; wherever they are, God will find them out. (2.) Though many of them are very unfit for travel, yet that shall be no hindrance to them; the blind and the lame shall come; such a good-will shall they have to their journey, and such a good heart upon it, that they shall not need the assistance of blind men and lame men, to excuse for staying where they are. Their companions will be ready to help them, will be eyes to the blind, and legs to the lame, as good Christians ought to be to one another in their travels homeward, Job xxix. 15. But, above all, their God will help them; and let none plead that he is blind, who has God for his Guide; or lame, who has God for his Strength. The women with child are heavy, one is not fit that they should undertake such a journey, much less those that travel with child; and yet, when it is to return to Zion, neither the one nor the other shall make any difficulty of it. Note, When God calls, we must not plead any inability to come; for he that calls us will help us, will strengthen us. (3.) Though they seem to be diminished, and to become few in numbers, yet, when they are one is together, they shall be a goodly company; and so will God's spiritual Israel be, when there shall be a general rendezvous of them, though now they are but a little flock. (4.) Though their return will be matter of joy to them, yet prayers and tears will be both their stores and their artillery; (v. 9.) They shall come with weeping, and with supplications, weeping for joy, praying, repeating good things; God shall lead them to repentance; and they shall weep with more bitterness and more tenderness for sin, when they are delivered out of their captivity, than ever they did when they were growing under it. Weeping and praying do well together; tears put life into prayers, and express the liveliness of them, and prayers help to wipe away tears. With favours will I lead them; (so the margin reads it;) in their journey they shall be compassed with God's favours, the fruits of his favour. (5.) Though they have a perilous journey, yet they shall be safe under a divine convoy. Is the country they pass through dry and thirsty? I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, not the waters of a land-flood, which fail in summer. Is it a wilderness where there is no road, no track? I will cause them to walk in a straight way, which they shall not miss. Is it a rough and rocky country? Yet they shall not stumble. Note, Whithersoever God gives his people a clear call, he will either find them, or make them, a ready way; and while we are following Providence, we may be sure that Providence will not be wanting to us. And, lastly, here is a reason given why God will take all this care of his people; for I am a Father to Israel, a father that begat him, and therefore will maintain him, that have the care and compassion of a father for him; (Ps. cm. 13.) and Ephraim is my first-born, even Ephraim, who, having gone astray from God, was no more worthy to be called a son, shall yet be owned as a first-born, particularly dear, and heir of a double portion of blessings. The same reason that was given for their release out of Egypt, is given for their release out of Babylon; they are free-born, and therefore must not be enslaved; and are beloved of God, and therefore must not be the servants of men; (Exod. iv. 22, 23.) Israel is my son, my first-born; let my son go, that he may serve me. If we take God for our Father, and join ourselves to the church of the first-born, we may be assured that we shall want nothing that is good for us.

10. Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattereth Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. 11. For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. 12. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock, and of the herd: and their souls shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. 13. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together; for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. 14. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord. 15. Thus saith the Lord, A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. 16. Thus saith the Lord, Re- fin thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. 17. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that
thy children shall come again to their own Lorder.

This paragraph is much to the same purport with the last, publishing to the world, as well as to the church, the purposes of God's love concerning his people. This is a word of the Lord, which the nations must hear, for it is a prophecy of a work of the Lord, which the nations cannot but take notice of. Let them hear the prophecy, that they may the better understand and improve the performance; and let them hear it themselves delivered to others, declare it in the isles afar off. It will be a piece of news that will spread all the world over. It will look very great in history; let us see how it looks in prophecy. It is foretold,

1. That those who are dispersed, shall be brought together again from their dispersions; He that scattered Israel will gather him; for he knows whither he scattereth them, and therefore where to find them. v. 10. Una cademque manus vult aequam tulit! — The hand that inflicted the wound shall heal it.

And when he has gathered him into one body, one fold, he will keep him, as a shepherd does his flock, from being scattered again.

2. That those who are sold and alienated, shall be redeemed and bought back, v. 11. Though the enemy bought him, the possession of himself they shall sing to the praise and glory of God. We read that they did so when the foundation of the temple was laid there; they sang together, praising, and giving thanks to the Lord, Ezra iii. 11. They shall fly together to the goodness of the Lord; they shall flock in great numbers and with great forwardness and cheerfulness, as streams of water, to the goodness of the Lord, to the temple where he causes his goodness to pass before his people. They shall come together in solemn assemblies, to praise him for his goodness, and to pray for the fruits of it, and the continuance of it; they shall come to bless him for his goodness, in giving them wheat, and wine, and oil, and the young of the flock and of the herd, which, now that they have obtained their freedom, they have an uncontested property in, and the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of; and which therefore they honour God with the first-fruits of, and out of which they bring offerings to his altar. Note, It is comfortable to observe the goodness of the Lord in the gifts of common providence, and even in them to taste covenant-love. Having plenty, (plenty out of want and scarcity,) they shall greatly rejoice, their soul shall be as a watered garden, flourishing and growing by the water, and the joy of their life is abundance, and abounding in all good things. Note, Our souls are never valuable as gardens but when they are watered with the dews of God's Spirit and grace. It is a precious promise which follows, and which will not have its full accomplishment any where on this side the height of the heavenly Zion, that they shall not sorrow any more at all; for it is only in that place that it will be fully accomplished. (Ps. lxxxvi. 2.)”

3. That with their liberty they shall have plenty and joy, and God shall be honoured and served with it, v. 12, 13. When they are returned to their own land, they shall come, and sing in the high place of Zion; on the top of that holy mountain they shall sing to the praise and glory of God. We read that they did so when the foundation of the temple was laid there; they sang together, praising, and giving thanks to the Lord, Ezra iii. 11. They shall fly together to the goodness of the Lord; they shall flock in great numbers and with great forwardness and cheerfulness, as streams of water, to the goodness of the Lord, to the temple where he causes his goodness to pass before his people. They shall come together in solemn assemblies, to praise him for his goodness, and to pray for the fruits of it, and the continuance of it; they shall come to bless him for his goodness, in giving them wheat, and wine, and oil, and the young of the flock and of the herd, which, now that they have obtained their freedom, they have an uncontested property in, and the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of; and which therefore they honour God with the first-fruits of, and out of which they bring offerings to his altar. Note, It is comfortable to observe the goodness of the Lord in the gifts of common providence, and even in them to taste covenant-love. Having plenty, (plenty out of want and scarcity,) they shall greatly rejoice, their soul shall be as a watered garden, flourishing and growing by the water, and the joy of their life is abundance, and abounding in all good things. Note, Our souls are never valuable as gardens but when they are watered with the dews of God's Spirit and grace. It is a precious promise which follows, and which will not have its full accomplishment any where on this side the height of the heavenly Zion, that they shall not sorrow any more at all; for it is only in that place that it will be fully accomplished. (Ps. lxxxvi. 2.)”

5. That those, particularly, who had been in sorrow for the loss of their children who were carried into captivity, should have that sorrow turned into joy upon their return, v. 15.—17. Here we have,

(1.) The sad lamentation which the mothers made for the loss of their children; (v. 15.) In Ramah was there a voice heard, at the time when the general captivity was, nothing but lamentation, and bitter weeping, more there than in other places, because there Nebuzaradan had the general rendezvous of his captives, as appears, ch. xl. 1. where we find him sending Jeremiah back from Ramah. Rachel is here said to weep for her children. The sepulchre of Rachel was between Ramah and Bethlehem. Benjamin, one of the two tribes, and Ephraim, head of the ten tribes, were both descendants from Rachel. She had but two sons, the elder of which was one for whom his father grieved, and refused to be comforted, (Gen. xxxvii. 35.) the other she herself called Benjamin—the son of my sorrow. Now the inhabitants of Ramah did in like manner grieve for their sons and their daughters that were carried away, (as I Sam. xxx. 6.) and such a voice of lamentation was there, as, to speak poetically, might even have raised Rachel out of her grave to mourn with them. The tender parents even refused to be comforted for their children, because they were not, were not with them, but were in the hands of their enemies; they were never likely to see them more. This is applied by the evangelists to the loss of the children of the church, who were killed by the sword of the kings of the Jews, and were scattered abroad. (Matt. ii. 16, 17.) and this scripture is said to be then fulfilled. They went for them, and would not be comforted, supposing the case would not admit any ground of comfort, because they were not. Note, Sorrow for the loss of children cannot but be great sorrow, especially if we so far mistake as to think they are not.
And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. 25. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. 26. Upon this I awaked, and behold; and my sleep was sweet unto me.

We have here,
1. Ephraim's repentance, and return to God. Not only Judah, but Ephraim, the ten tribes, shall be restored, and therefore shall thus be prepared and qualified for it. Hos. xiv. 8. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? Ephraim, the people, is here spoken of as a single person, and cannot by any metaphor be ascribed to his repentance, and shall glorify God in it with one mind and one mouth, one and all. It is likewise thus expressed, that it might be the better accommodated to particular penitents, for whose direction and encouragement this passage is interred.

Ephraim is here brought in, weeping for sin, perhaps because Ephraim, the person from whom that name is derived, had fallen into the inordinity of spirit, mourned for his children many days; (1 Chron. vii. 21, 22.) and sorrow for sin is compared to that for an only son. This penitent is here brought in, (1.) Bemoaning himself, and the miseries of his present case. True penitents do thus bemoan themselves. (2.) Accusing himself, laying a load upon himself as a sinner, a great sinner. He charges himself with being in the first place, the sin and self of conscience told him that he was more especially guilty of at this time; and that was, impenitence under correction; "Thou hast chastised me; I have been under the rod, and I needed it; I deserved it; I was justly chastised, chastised as a bullock, who had never felt the good if he had not first rebelled against the yoke." True penitents look upon their afflictions as fatherly chastisements; "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised; it was well that I was chastised, otherwise I had been undone; it did me good, or at least was intended to do me good; and yet I have been impatient under it." Or, it may speak his want of feeling under the affliction; "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, that was all, I was not awakened by it, and quickened by it; I looked no further than the chastisement, I have been under the chastisement as a bullock unacquainted to the yoke, unruly and unmanageable, kicking against the pricks, like a wild bull in a net." Isa. li. 20. This is the sin he finds himself guilty of now; but (v. 19.) he reflects upon his former sins, and looks as far back as the days of his youth. The discovery of one sin should put us upon searching out more; now he remembers it, he looks no further than the chastisement as a bullock unacquainted to the yoke, unruly and unmanageable, kicking against the pricks, like a wild bull in a net. Isau. li. 20. This is the sin he finds himself guilty of now; but (v. 19.) he reflects upon his former sins, and looks as far back as the days of his youth. The discovery of one sin should put us upon searching out more; now he remembers it, he looks no further than the chastisement as a bullock unacquainted to the yoke, unruly and unmanageable, kicking against the pricks, like a wild bull in a net.

18. I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unacquainted to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. 19. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. 20. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord. 21. Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thy heart toward the highway, even the way which thou watest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities. 22. How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man. 23. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah, and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity: The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. 24.
Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; which implies that unless God do turn him by his grace, he shall never be turned, but wander endlessly; that therefore he is very desirous of converting grace, has a dependence upon it, and doubts not that that grace will be sufficient for him, to help him over all the difficulties that were in the way of his return to God. See ch. xvii. 14, Heal me, and I shall be healed: speak thou But he was acting upon his own willing willing; if he undertake the conversion of a soul, it will be converted. (5.) He is here pleasing himself with the experience he had of the blessed effect of divine grace; Surely after that I was turned, I repented. Note, All the pains workings of our hearts toward God, are the fruit and consequence of the powerful working of his grace in us. And observe, He was turned, he was instructed, his will was bowed to the will of God, by the right informing of his judgment concerning the truths of God. Note, The way God takes of converting souls to himself, is, by opening the eyes of their understandings, and all good follows thereupon; After that I was instructed, I yielded, I smote upon my thigh. When sinners come to a right knowledge, that is, when he will, the way was, he was instructed, and that did not produce the desired effect, it went no further; I was chastised, and that was all. But when the instructions of God's Spirit accompanied the corrections of his providence, then the work was done, then he smote upon his thigh, was so humbled for sin as to have no more to do with God's compassion on Ephraim, and the kind reception he finds with God, v. 20. (1.) He owns him for a child, though he has been an unthankful child and a prodigal; Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? Thus when Ephraim bemoans himself, God bemoans him, as one whom his mother comforts, though she had chidden him. Isa. lxvi. 13. Is this Ephraim my dear son? Is this that pleasant child? Is it he that is thus sad in spirit, and that complains so bitterly? So it is like that of Saul, (1 Sam. xxvi. 17.) Is this thy voice, my son David? Or, as it is sometimes supplied, Is not Ephraim my dear son? Is he not a pleasant child? Yes, now he is, now he repents and returns. Note, Those that have been unthankful, backsliding children, if they sincerely return and repent, however they have been, shall be owned as such; and the children so shall be called of God as dear and pleasant children. Ephraim had afflicted himself, but God thus heals him: and absolved himself, but God thus honours him; as the returning prodigal, who thought himself no more worthy to be called a son, yet, by his father, had the best robe put upon him, and a ring on his hand. (2.) He relents toward him, and speaks of him with a great deal of tender compassion; Since I spake against him, by the threatenings of the word and the rebukes of providence, I do earnestly remember him still, my thoughts toward him are thoughts of peace. Note, When God afflicts his people, yet he does not forget them; when he casts them out of their land, yet he does not cast them out of sight, nor out of mind. Even then when God's spiritual greatest of the tender is acting for us, and designing our good in all; and this is our comfort in our affliction, that the Lord thinks upon us, though we have forgotten him. I remember him still, and therefore my bowels are troubled for him, as Joseph's yearned toward his brethren, even then when he shake roughly to them. When Israel's afflictions extorted a penitent confession and submission, it is said, that his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel; (Judg. x. 16.) for he always afflicts with the greatest tenderness. It was God's compassion that mitigated Ephraim's punishment; My heart is turned within me; (Hos. xi. 8, 9,) and now the same compassion accepted Ephraim's repentance. Ephraim had pleaded, (v. 18.) Thou art the Lord my God, therefore to thee will I return, therefore on thy mercy and grace I will depend; and God shows it was a valid plea, and prevailing, for he makes it appear both that he is God, and not man, and that he is his God. (5.) He resolves to do him good; I will surely have mercy upon him, for I am the Lord that blotteth out thine iniquities for mine own sake, saith the Lord, to set bounds for thee, rich mercy, sure mercy, suitable mercy, for all that in sincerity seek him, and submit to him; and the more we are afflicted for sin, the better prepared we are for the comforts of that mercy.

3. Gracious excitaments and encouragements given to the people of God in Babylon, to prepare for their return to their own land. Let them not tremble, and lose their spirits; let them not trait, and lose their time; but with a firm resolution, in a close application address themselves to their journey, v. 21, 22. (1.) They must think of nothing but of coming back to their own country, out of which they had been driven; Turn again, O virgin of Israel, a virgin to be again espoused to thy God, turn again to these thy cities; though they are laid waste and in ruins, they are thy cities, which the Lord hath visited, and redeemed them. They must be content in Babylon no longer than till they had liberty to return to Zion. (2.) They must return the same way that they went, that the remembrance of the sorrows which attended them, or which their fathers had told them of, in such and such places upon the road, the sight of which would, by a local memory, put them in mind of them, and make them the more thoughtful for their deliverance. These that have departed from God into the bondage of sin, must return by the way in which they went astray, to the duties they neglected, must do their first works. (3.) They must engage themselves and all that is within them in this affair; Set thy heart toward the highway; bring thy mind to it; consider thy duty, think interest, and go about it with a good will. Note, The way from Babylon to Zion, from the bondage of sin to the glorious liberty of God's children, is a highway; it is right, it is plain, it is safe, it is well tracked; (Isa. xxxv. 8,) yet none are likely to walk in it, unless they set their hearts toward it. (4.) They must furnish themselves with all needful accommodations for their journey; Set thee up way-marks, that they may make the higher heaven, their home, have such set up in all places where there is any danger of missing the road. Let those that go first, and are best acquainted with the way, set up such directions for those that follow. (5.) They must compose themselves for their journey. How long will thou go about, O backsliding daughter? Let not their minds be saved, or be uncertain about, but resolve upon it; let them not distract themselves with care and fear; let them not seek about to create situations for assistance, nor hurry hither and thither in courting them, which had often been an instance of their backsliding from God; but let them cast themselves upon God, and then let their minds be fixed. (6.) They are encouraged to do this by an assurance given them, that he would create a new thing, strange and surprising in the earth, in that land a woman shall compass a man. The church of God, that is weak and feeble as a woman, altogether unapt for military employments, and of a timorous spirit, shall surround, besiege, and prevail against a mighty man, Isa. liv. 6. The church is compared to a woman, Rev. xii. 1. And whereas we find armed companies of the camp of the saints, (Heb. xii. 2.) now the camp of the saints shall compass them. Many good interpreters understand this new thing created in that land to be the incarnation of Christ, which God had an eye to in bringing them back to
man, and with the seed of beast. 29. And it shall come to pass, that as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the Lord. 29. In those days they shall say no more, They have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. 30. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. 31. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; 32. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them; saith the Lord;) 33. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

The prophet, having found his sleep sweet, made so by the revelations of divine grace, sets himself to sleep again, in hopes of further discoveries, and is not disappointed; for it is here further promised, 1. That the people of God shall become both numerous and prosperous. Israel and Judah shall be replenished both with men and cattle, as if they were sown with the seed of both, v. 27. They shall increase and multiply like a field, or vine; and this is the product of God's blessing, (v. 25,) for whom God blessed, to them he said, Be fruitful. This should be a type of the wondrous increase of the gospel-church. God will build them, and plant them, v. 28. He will watch over them, to do them good; no opportunity shall be lost, that may further their prosperity. Every thing for a long time had turned so much against them, and all occurrences were so conspiciously contrary to them, that it seemed, as if they had watched over them, to pluck up, and to throw down; but now every thing that falls out, shall happily fall in to strengthen and advance their interests. God will be as ready to comfort those that repent of their sins, and are humbled for them, as he is to punish those that continue in love with their sins, and are hardened in them. That care shall be reckoned with no further for the sins of their fathers; (v. 29, 30.) They shall say no more, they shall have no more occasion to say, that God visits the iniquity of the parents upon the children, which God had done in the captivity; for the sins of their ancestors came into the account against them, particularly those of Manasseh: this they had complained of as a hardship. Other scriptures justify God in this method of proceeding,
and our Saviour tells the wicked Jews in his days, that they should smart for their fathers' sins, because they persisted in them, Matt. xxviii. 35, 36. But it is here promised that this severe dispensation with them should now be brought to an end: that God would proceed no further in his controversy with them for their fathers' sins, but remember for them his covenant with their fathers, and do them good according to that covenant: They shall no more complain, as they have done, that the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge; (which speaks something of an absurdity, and is an invidious reflection upon God's proceedings;) but every one shall die for his own iniquity still; though God will cease to punish them in their national capacity, yet he will still reckon with revolting persons that provoke him. Note, Public revelations will give no impunity, no security to private sinners: still every man that eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge. Note, Those that eat forbidden fruit, how temptingly soever it looks, will find it a sour grape, and it will set their teeth on edge, sooner or later, they will feel it, and reflect upon it with bitterness. There is as direct a comparison made in the covenant, so there is in sour grapes to set the teeth on edge.

III. That God will renew his covenant with them, so that all these blessings they shall have, not by provision only, but by promise, and thereby they shall be both sweetened and secured. But this covenant refers to gospel-times, the latter days that shall come for of gospel-grace the Jews under the Old Testament; and Israel had been two separate kingdoms, but were united, after their return, in the joint favours God bestowed upon them: so Jews and Gentiles were in the gospel-church and covenant.

1. That the persons are, with whom this covenant is made, with the house of Israel and Judah, with the gospel-church, the Israel of God, on which notice shall be, (Gal. vi. 15.) with the spiritual seed of believing Abraham and praying Jacob, Judea and Israel had been two separate kingdoms, but were united, after their return, in the joint favours God bestowed upon them: so Jews and Gentiles were in the gospel-church and covenant.

2. What is the nature of this covenant in general; it is a new covenant, and not according to the covenant made with them, when they came out of Egypt; not as if that made with them at mount Sinai were a covenant on a lower footing, and to be abolished with Adam in the day he was created; no; that was, for substance, a covenant of grace, but it was a dark dispensation of that covenant, in comparison with this in gospel-times. Sinners were saved by that covenant, upon their repentance, and faith in a Messiah to come, whose blood, confirming that covenant, was typified by that of the legal sacrifices, Exod. xxv. 7. 8. Yet this may appear may accounts be called new, in comparison with that; the ordinances and promises are more spiritual and heavenly, and the discoveries much more clear. That covenant God made with them when he took them by the hand, as if they had been blind or lame, or weak, to lead them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant they brake, Observe, It was God that made this covenant, but it was the people that brake it; for our salvation is of God, but our sin and ruin are of ourselves. It was an aggravation of their breach of it, that God was a Husband to them, that he had espoused them to himself, it was a marriage-covenant that was between him and them, which they brake by idolatry, that spiritual adultery. It is a great aggravation of that covenant, that he has been a Husband to us, an lover, tender, careful Husband, faithful to us, and yet we false to him.

3. What are the particular articles of this covenant; they all contain spiritual blessings; not, "I will give them the land of Canaan and a numerous issue," but, "I will give them pardon, and peace, and grace, good heads and good hearts." He promises,

(1.) That he will incline them to their duty; I will put my law in their inward part, and write it in their heart; not, I will give them a new law, (as Mr. Gataker makes it,) but Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it; but the law shall be written in their hearts by the finger of the Spirit, as formerly it was written in the tables of stone. God writes his law in the hearts of all believers, makes it ready and familiar to them, at hand when they have occasion to use it, as that which is written in the heart, Prov. iii. 3. He makes them in care to observe it, that when it is written, will feel it is an unfinished object, is a commendable, a conformity of thought and affection to the rules of the divine law, as that of the copy to the original. This is here promised, and ought to be prayed for, that our duty may be done conscientiously and with delight.

(2.) That he will take them into relation to himself; I will be their God, a God all-sufficient to them; and they shall be my people, a loyal, obedient people to me. God's being to us a God is the summary of all happiness, heaven itself is no more, Heb. xi. 16. Rev. xxii. 3. Our being to him a people may be taken either as the condition on our part, (those and those only shall have God to be to them a God, that are truly willing to engage themselves to be a people,) or as a further branch of the promise, that God who makes them his people will be a willing people, in the day of his power; and, whoever are his people, it is his grace that makes them so.

(3.) That there shall be an abundance of the knowledge of God among all sorts of people, and this will have an influence upon all good; for they that rightly know God's name, will seek him, and serve him, and put their trust in him. Mat. 24:40. He shall know me; all shall be welcome to the knowledge of God, and shall have the means of that knowledge; his way shall be known upon earth; whereas, for many ages, in Judah only was God known. Many more shall know God than did in the Old Testament times, which among the Gentiles were times of ignorance, but now God is known, amongst all the nations. The things of God shall in gospel-times be made more plain and intelligible, and level to the capacities of the meanest, than they had been, while Moses had a veil upon his face. There shall be such a general knowledge of God, that there shall not be so much need as had formerly been of teaching. Some take it as a hyperbolic expression, (and the dulness of the Jews needed such expressions to awaken them,) designed only to show that the knowledge of God, in gospel-times should vastly exceed that knowledge of him, which they had under the law. Or, perhaps, it intimates that in gospel-times there shall be such great plenty of public preaching, steadily and constantly, by men authorised and appointed to preach the word in season and out of season, much beyond what was under the law; that there shall be less need than there was then of fraternal teaching, by a neighbour and a brother. The priests preached but now and then, and in the temple, to a few in comparison; but now all shall or may know God by frequenting the assemblies of Christians, wherein, through all parts of the church, the good knowledge of God shall be taught, and give this sense of it. (Mr. Gataker mentions it,) that many shall have such clearness of understanding in the things of God, that they may seem rather to have been taught by some immediate irradiation than by any means of instruction in short, the
things of God shall by the gospel of Christ be brought to a clearer light than ever, (2 Tim. i. 10.) and the people of God shall by the grace of Christ be brought to a clearer sight of those things than ever, Eph. i. 17, 18.

(4.) That, in order to all these blessings, sin shall be pardoned; this is made the reason of all the rest; For I will forgive their iniquity, will not iniquity; that they, nor deal with them according to the desert of that, will forgive and forget; I will remember their sin no more. It is sin that keeps good things from us, that stops the current of God's favours; let sin be taken away by pardoning mercy, and the obstruction is removed, and divine grace runs down like a river, like a mighty stream.

35. Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts is his name: 36. If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. 37. Thus saith the Lord, If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel, for all that they have done, saith the Lord. 38. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord, from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. 39. And the measuring-line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. 40. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields, unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse-gate towards the east, shall be holy unto the Lord; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down, any more for ever.

Glorious things have been spoken in the foregoing verses concerning the gospel-church, which that epocha of the Jewish church, that was to commence at the return from captivity, would at length terminate in, and which all those promises were to have their full accomplishments in. But may we depend upon these promises? Yes, we have here a ratification of them, and the utmost assurance imaginable given of the perpetuity of the blessings contained in them. The great thing here secured to us, is, that while the world stands, God will have a church in it, which, though sometimes it may be brought very low, shall yet be raised again, and its interests re-established; it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Now here are two things offered for the confirmation of our faith in this vision; the building of the world, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

I. The building of the world, and the firmness and lastingness of that building, are evidences of the power and faithfulness of that God who has undertaken the establishment of his church. He that built all things at first is God, (Heb. iii. 4.) and the same is he that makes all things new. The constancy of the glories of the kingdom of nature may encourage us to depend upon the divine promise for the continuance of the glories of the kingdom of grace, for this is as the waters of Noah, Isa. lv. 9. Let us observe here,

1. The glories of the kingdom of nature, and infer thence how happy they are that have this God, the God of nature, to be their God for ever and ever. Take notice, (1.) Of the steady and regular motion of the heavens, which are moved in the way of God, by the Director of; He gives the sun for a light by day; (v. 35.) not only made it at first to be so, but still gives it to be so, for the light and heat, and all the influences of the sun, continually depend upon its great Creator. He gives the ordinances of the moon and stars for a light by night; their motions are called ordinances, both because they are regular and by rule, and because they are determined; he further rules them by his ordinance, v. 33. (2.) Take notice of the government of the sea, and the check that is given to its proud billows; The Lord of hosts divides the sea, or, as some read it, sets the sea, when the waves thereof roar; (Divide, et impera—Divide, and rule;) when it is most tossed, God keeps it within compass, (Jer. v. 22.) and soon quiet it and makes it calm again. The power of God is to be magnified, not only in maintaining the regular motions of the heavens, but in controlling the irregular motions of the seas. (3.) Take notice of the vastness of the heavens and the unmeasurable extent of the firmament; he must needs be a great God, who manages such a great world as this is; the heavens above cannot be measured, (v. 37.) and yet God fills them. (4.) Take notice of the mysterious continuance of events in the works of God, which are in which our lot is cast, and which we are most conversant with. The foundations of the earth cannot be searched out beneath, for the Creator hangs the earth upon nothing, (Job. xxxvi. 7.) and we know not how the foundations thereof are fastened, Job. xxxviii. 6. (5.) Take notice of the inimmovable steadfastness of all these; (v. 36.) These ordinances cannot depart from before us; he builds all the hosts of heaven and earth continually under his eye, and all the motions of both; he has established them, and they abide, abide according to his ordinance, for all are his servants, Ps. cxix. 90, 91. The heavens are often clouded, and the sun and moon often eclipsed, the earth may quake and the sea be tossed, but they all keep their place, are moved, but not removed. Herein we must acknowledge the power, goodness and faithfulness of the Creator of the universe.

2. The securities of the kingdom of grace inferred from hence; we may be confident of this very thing, that the seed of Israel shall not cease from being a nation, for the spiritual Israel, the gospel-church, shall be a holy nation, a peculiar people, 1 Pet. ii. 9. When Israel according to the flesh is no longer a nation, the children of the promise are counted for the seed, (Gen. xvii. 8.) and God will not cast off all the seed of Israel, no, not for all that they have done, though they have done very wickedly, v. 37. He justly might cast them off, but he will not. Though he cast them out from their land, and cast them down for a time, yet he will not cast them off. Some of them he casts off, for not all to this the apostle says to refer, (Rom. xi.) 1 Hath God cast away his people? For (v. 3.) at this time there is a remnant, enough to save the credit of the promise, that God will not cast off all the seed of Israel, though many among them throw away themselves by unbelief. Now we may be assisted in the belief of this, by considering, (1.) That the God that has undertaken the preservation of the church, he who has of almighty power, who builds up a building, and sets it firmly by his almighty word. Our help stands in his name, who made heaven and earth, and therefore can do any thing. (2.) That God would not take all this care of the world, but that he designs to have some glory to himself out of it; and how shall
he have it but by securing to himself a church in it, a people that shall be to him for a name and a praise? (5.) That if the order of the creation therefore continues firm, because it was well fixed at first, and is not altered because it needs no alteration, the method of grace shall for the same reason continue immutable, as it was at first well settled. (4.) That he who has promised to preserve a church for himself, has approved himself faithful to the word which he has spoken, concerning the stability of the world. He that is true to his covenant with Noah and his sons, because he established it for an everlasting covenant, (Gen. ix. 16.) will not continue to subserve his people, with Abraham and his seed, his spiritual seed, for that also is an everlasting covenant. Even that which they have done amiss, though they have done much, shall not prevail to defeat the gracious intentions of the covenant. See Ps. lxxxix. 30, &c.

II. The rebuilding of Jerusalem which was now in ruins, and the enlargement and establishment of that, shall be an earnest of these great things that God will do for the gospel-church, the heavenly Jerusalem, v. 38—40. The days will come, though they may be long in coming, 1. When Jerusalem shall be entirely built again, as large as ever it was; the dimensions are here exactly described, by the places through which the circumference passed, and, no doubt, the wall which Nehemiah built, and which he said he made stronger to fortify it. They began about the tower of Hanameel, here mentioned, (Neh. iii. 1.) enclosed as much ground as is here intended, though we cannot certainly determine the places here called the gate of the corner, the hill Garub, &c. 2. When, being built, it shall be consecrated to God and to his service. It shall be built to the Lord, (v. 38.) and even the suburbs and fields adjoining it shall be the Lord's; as in the time of David, which was not polluted with idols as formerly, but God shall be praised and honoured there; the whole city shall be as it were one temple, one holy place, as the new Jerusalem is, which therefore has no temple, because it is all temple. 3. Being thus built by virtue of the promise of God, and then devoted to the praise of God, it shall not be plucked up, or thrown down, any more forever, it shall be without any ruins, without the least destruction. 4. The time of the new city from the return to its last destruction being full as long as that of the old from David to the captivity. But this promise was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel-church, which, as it is the spiritual Israel, and therefore God will not cast it off, so it is the holy city, and therefore all the powers of men shall not remove it, or throw it down. It may be waste for a time, as Jerusalem did, but shall recover itself, shall weather the storm, and gain its point, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

CHAP. XXXII.

In this chapter, we have, I. Jeremiah imprisoned for foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity of king Zedekiah, v. 1—5. II. We have him buying land, by divine appointment, as an assurance that in due time a happy end should be put to the present troubles, v. 6—13. III. We have his prayer, which he offered up to God upon that occasion, v. 16—25. IV. We have a message which God thereupon intrusted him to deliver to the people. 1. He must foretell the utter destruction of Jerusalem, and their city shall be burned down, v. 26—35. 2. At the same time he must assure them, that though the destruction was total, it should not be final, but that at length their posterity should recover the peaceable possession of their land, v. 36—44. V. The prefigurations of this chapter, both threatenings and promises, are much the same with what we have already met with again and again, but here are some circumstances that are very particular and remarkable.

1. The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar.

2. For then the king of Babylon's army be siezed Jerusalem: and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house. 3. For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; 4. And Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes; 5. And he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith the Lord; though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper. 6. And Jeremiah said, The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 7. Behold, Hanameel, the son of Shallum, thine uncle, shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee field, that is in Anathoth; for the right of redemption is thine to buy it. 8. So Hanameel, mine uncle's son, came to me in the court of the prison, according to the word of the Lord, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth; which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord. 9. And I bought the field of Hanameel, mine uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. 10. And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it: and took witnesses, and weighed him in the balances. 11. And I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open. 12. And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. 13. And I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, (both which is sealed,) and this evidence which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days: 15. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, (both which is sealed,) and this evidence which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days: 15. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, (both which is sealed,) and this evidence which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days: 15. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Take these evidences.
now coming very nigh to that fatal year which completed the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. God’s judgments came gradually upon them, but they not meeting him by repentance in the way of his judgments, he proceeded in his controversy till all was laid waste, which was in the eleventh year of Zedekiah; now what he next affected was his person. The king of Babylon’s army had now invested Jerusalem, and was carrying on the siege with vigour, not doubting but in a little time to make themselves masters of it, while the besieged had taken up a desperate resolution not to surrender, but to hold it out to the last extremity. Now,

I. Jeremiah prophesies that both the city and the court shall fall into the hands of the king of Babylon. He tells them expressly, that the besiegers shall take the city as a prize, for God, whose city it was in a peculiar manner, will give it into their hands, and put it out of his protection; (v. 3.) that though Zedekiah attempt to make his escape, he shall be overtaken, and shall be delivered a prisoner into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, shall be brought into his presence, and his great confusion and tears there, for breaking his faith with him; he shall hear the king of Babylon pronounce his doom, and see with what fury and indignation he will look upon him; his eyes shall behold his eyes, v. 4. That Zedekiah shall be carried to Babylon, and continue a miserable captive there, until God visit him, till God put an end to his life by a natural death, as Nebuchadnezzar had long before prophesied, v. 5. See ch. xxxiv. 2, 3. putting on his eyes. Note, Those that live in misery may be truly said to be visited in mercy, when God by death takes them home to himself. And, lastly, he foretells that all their attempts to force the besiegers from their trenches should be ineffectual; Though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper; how should they, when God did not fight for them? v. 5. See ch. xxxiv. 2, 3. For propounding on his eyes.

II. For propounding thus, he is imprisoned, not in the common gaol, but in the more creditable prison that was within the verge of the palace, in the king of Judah’s house, and there not closely confined, but in custodia libera, in the court of the prison, where he might have good company, good air, and good intelligence brought him, and would be sheltered from the abuses of that place. It was, therefore, as to a prison and Zedekiah shut him up in it for propounding as he did, v. 2, 3. So far was he from humbling himself before Jeremiah, as he ought to have done; (2 Chron. xxxix. 12.) that he hardened himself against him. Though he had formerly so far owned him to be a prophet, as to desire him to inquire of the Lord for them, (ch. xxxvi. 2.) yet now he chides him for propounding, (v. 5.) and shifts him up in the tent, perhaps, to his design to punish him any further, but only to restrain him from propounding any further, which was crime enough. Silencing God’s prophets, though it is not so bad as mocking and killing them, is yet a great affront to the God of heaven. See how wretchedly the hearts of sinners are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Persecution was one of the sins of Judah; which happened in the tenth year, that is, 11 years after the taking of Jerusalem, and yet Zedekiah persists in it even now that he was in the depth of distress. No provinences, no afflictions, will of themselves part between men and their sins, unless the grace of God work with them. Nay, some are made worse by those very judgments that should make them better.

III. Though in prison, he purchases a piece of ground near a relation of his, that lay in Anathoth, v. 6, 7, &c. One would not have expected, 1. That a prophet should concern himself so far in the business of this world; but why not? Though ministers must not entertain themselves, yet they may concern themselves, in the affairs of this life. 2. That one who had neither wife nor children should buy land; we find, (ch. xvi. 2.) that he had no family of his own, yet he may purchase for his own use while he lives, and leave it to the children who should succeed him in his estate when he dies. 3. One would little have thought that prophets would concern themselves, how should he get money beforehand to buy land with? It is probable that he lived frugally, and saved something out of what belonged to him as a priest, which is no blemish at all to his character; but we have no reason to think that the people were kind, or that his being beforehand was owing to their generosity. Nay, 4. It was most strange of all that he should buy land himself. For though he knew that the whole land was now to be laid waste, and fall into the hands of the Chaldeans; and then what good would this do him? But it was the will of God that he should buy it, and he submitted, though the money seemed to be thrown away. His kinsman came to offer him it; it was not of his own seeking; he coveted not to lay house and house adjacent to it, and to build and plant there; but Providence brought it to him, and it was, probably, a good bargain; besides, the right of redemption belonged to him, (v. 8.) and if he refused, he did not do the kinsman’s part. It is true, he might lawfully refuse; but, being a prophet, in a thing of this nature, he must do that which would be for the honour of his profession; it became him to fulfil all righteousness. It was a land that lay within the suburbs of a priest’s city, and if he should refuse it there was danger lest in these times of disorder, it might be sold to one of another tribe, which was contrary to the law, to prevent which it was convenient for him to buy it. It would likewise be a kindness to his kinsman, who, probably, was at this time in great want of money. Jeremiah had but a little, but what he had was willing to lay it out in such a manner as might tend most to the honour of God and the good of his friends and country, which he preferred before his own private interests. Observe,

(1.) How fairly the bargain was made. When Jeremiah knew by Hanameel’s coming to him, as God had foretold he would, that it was the word of the Lord, that it was his mind that he should make this purchase, he made no more difficulty of it, but immediately, as he did with all, did the business that was committed to him, and exact in paying the money. He weighed him the money, did not press him to take it upon his report, though he was his near kinsman, but weighed it to him, current money. It was seventeen shekels of silver, amounting to about forty shillings of our money. It was, probably, but a little field, and of small yearly value, when the purchase was so low; besides, the right of inheritance was in Jeremiah, so that he was only to buy out his kinsman’s life, the reversion was his already. Some think this was only the earnest of a greater sum; but we shall not wonder at the smallness of the price, if we consider what scarcity there was of money at this time, and how little lands were valued upon. [2.] He was very prompt and discreet in preserving the writings. They were rigorously before and after Jeremiah, as was sealed up, the other was open. One was the original, the other the counterfeit; or perhaps that which was sealed up was for his own private use, the other that was open was to be laid up in the public register of conveyances, for any person concerned to consult. Due care and caution, in things of this nature, might prevent a great deal of injustice and error. The conveyance was made in the hands of Baruch, before witnesses, and he was ordered to lay them up in an earthen vessel, (an emblem of the nature of all the securities this world can pretend to give us, brittle things, and
good

caji. When purchasing Whatever time That Note, upon the makers, by his own practice in living unmarried, so he now appointed him to confirm his predictions of the future restoration of Jerusalem, by his own practice in purchasing this field. Note, It concerns ministers to make it to appear in their whole conversation, that they do themselves believe that which they preach to others; and that they may do so, and impress it the deeper upon their hearers, they must many a time deny themselves, as Jeremiah did in both these instances. God having promised that this land should again come into the possession of his people, Jeremiah will, in behalf of his heirs, put in for a share. Note, It is good to manage even our worldly affairs in faith, and to do common business with an eye to the providence and promise of God. Lucius Florus relates it as a great instance of the bravery of the Roman citizens, that in the time of the second Punic war, when Hannibal besieged Rome, and was very near making himself master of it, a field on which part of his army lay, being offered to sale at that time, was immediately purchased, in a firm belief that the Roman honour would raise the siege, lib. 2. chap. 10. verses 2, 3. Another account is, that they venture our all upon the word of God, and to embark in Zion's interests, which will undoubtedly be the prevailing interests at last! Non si male nunc et olim sic erit—Though now we suffer, we shall not suffer always.

16. Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the Lord, saying, 17. Ah, Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee: 18. Thou shewest loving-kindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: The Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of hosts, is his name. 19. Great in counsel, and mighty in work: (for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men; to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings:) 20. Which hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and among other men; and hast made thee a name, as at this day; 21. And hast brought forth thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt, with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with great terror; 22. And hast given them this land, which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey; 23. And they came in, and possessed it; but they obeyed not thy voice, neither walked in thy law: they have done nothing of all that thou commandedst them to do; therefore thou hast caused all this evil to come upon them. 24. Behold the mounts, they are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and what thou hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, thou seest it. 25. And thou hast said unto me, O Lord God, Buy thee the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.

We have here Jeremiah's prayer to God, upon occasion of the discoveries God had made to him of his purposes concerning this nation, to pull it down, and in process of time to build it up again, which purpose the prophet himself, who, though he delivered his messages faithfully and just, in reflecting upon them, was at a loss within himself how to reconcile them; in that perplexity he poured out his soul before God in prayer, and so gave himself ease. That which disturbed him was, not the bad bargain he seemed to have made for himself in purchasing a field that he was likely to have no good of but the evil of his people, for whom he was still a kind and faithful intercessor, and he was willing to hope that if God had so much mercy in store for them hereafter as he had promised, he would not proceed with so much severity against them now as he had threatened. Before Jeremiah went to prayer, he delivered the deeds that concerned his new purchase to Baruch; which may intimate to us, that when we are going to worship God, we should get our minds as clear as may be from the cares and encumbrances of this world. Jeremiah was in prison, in distress, in the dark about the meaning of God's providences, and then he prays. Note, Prayer is a salve for every sore. Whatever is a burden to us, we may by prayer cast it upon the Lord, and then be easy.

In this prayer of meditation, 1. Jeremiah adores God and his infinite perfections, and gives him the glory due to his name as the Creator, Upholder, and Benefactor, of the whole creation; thereby owning his irresistible power, that he can do what he will, and his incontestable sovereignty, that he may do what he will, v. 17.—19. Note, When at any time we are perplexed about the particular methods and dispensations of God's providence, it is good for us to have recourse to our first principles, and to satisfy ourselves with the general doctrines of God's wisdom, power, and goodness. Let us consider, as Jeremiah does here, (1. ) That God is the Fountain of all being, power, life, motion, and perfection; He made the heaven and the earth with an outstretched arm; and therefore who can control him? Who can contend with him? (2.) That with him nothing is impossible, no difficulty insuperable: Nothing is too hard for thee. When human skill and power is quite neplusculmus, with God are strength and wisdom sufficient to master all the opposition. (3. ) That he is a God of boundless, bottomless mercy; that is his distinguishing attribute; and his goodness that is his glory; Then not only art kind, but thou showest loving-kindness, art to a few, to here and there one, but to thousands, thousands of persons, thousands of generations.” (4. )
Jeremiah, xxii.

That he is a God of impartial and inflexible justice. His repriences are not pardons, but if in mercy he spares the parents, that they may lead to repentance, yet such a hatred has he to sin, and such displeasure against sinners, that he recompenes their iniquity into the bosom of their children, and yet does them no wrong: so hateful is the unrighteousness of man, and so jealous of its own honour is the righteousness of God. (5.) That he is a God of universal dominion and command; He is the great God, for he is the mighty God, and might among mighty (v. 5.) He is to be before angels, and all hosts, that is his name, and he answers to his name, for all the hosts of heaven and earth, of men and angels, are at his beck. (6.) That he contrives every thing for the best, and effects every thing as he contrived it; He is great in counsel; so vast are the reaches, and so deep are the designs, of his wisdom; and he is mighty in doing, according to the counsel of his will. Now such a God, this is not to be quarrelled with. His service is to be constantly adhered to, and all his dispositions cheerfully acquiesced in.

2. He acknowledges the universal cognizance God takes of all the actions of the children of men, and the unerring judgment he passes upon them; (v. 19.) Thine eyes are open upon all the sons of men, wherever they are, beholding the evil and the good, and upon all their works, be it good or evil, and every step they take, not as an unconcerned Spectator, but as an observing Judge, to give every one according to his ways, and according to his deserts, which are the fruit of his doing, for men shall find God as they are found of him.

3. He recounts the great things God had done for his people Israel formerly. (1.) He brought them out of Egypt, that house of bondage, with signs and wonders, which remain, if not in the marks of them, yet in the memoriials of them, even unto this day; for it would never be forgotten, not only in Israel, who were reminded of it every year by the ordinance of the passover, but among other men; all the neighbouring nations spake of it, as that which rebounded exceedingly to the glory of the God of Israel, and made him a name as the day came. (2.) It is proposed, that again God will bring them forth, not only with comforts and joys to them, but with glory to himself, with signs and wonders, (witness the ten plagues) with a strong hand, too strong for the Egyptians themselves, and with a stretched-out arm, that reached Pharaoh, proud as he was, and with great terror to them and all about them. This seems to refer to Deut. iv. 54. (3.) He brought them into Canaan, that good land, that land flowing with milk and honey; he swore to their fathers to give it them, and because he would perform his oath, he did give it to the children, (v. 22.) and they came in, and possessed it. Jeremiah mentions this both as an aggravation of their sin and disobedience, and also as a plea with God to work deliverance for them. Note, It is good for us often to reflect upon the great things that God did for our fathers, especially in the first erecting of it, that work of wonder.

4. He bewails the rebellions they had been guilty of against God, and the judgments God had brought upon them for these rebellions. It is a sad account he here gives of the ungrateful conduct of that people toward God. He had done every thing that he purposed, they could do, (they had not honored, 1 Kings vii. 56.) but they had done nothing of all that he commanded them to do; (v. 23.) they made no conscience of any of his laws, they walked not in them, paid no respect to any of his calls by his prophets, for they obeyed not his voice. And therefore he owns that God was righteous in causing all this evil to come upon them. The city is besieged, is attacked by the sword without, is weakened and wasted by the famine and pestilence within, so that it is ready to fall into the hands of the Chaldeans that fight against it: (v. 24.) It is given into their hands, v. 24. Now, (1.) He compares the present state of Jerusalem with the divine predictions, and finds that what God has spoken, is come to pass. God had given them fair warning of it before; if they had regarded this, the ruin had been prevented; but if they will not do what God has commanded, they can expect no other than that he should do what he has threatened. (2.) He calls them to the divine consideration and compassion; (v. 24.) Behold the mounts, or ramparts, or the engines, which they make use of to batter the city, and beat down the wall of it. And again, "Behold, thou sest it, and takest cognizance of it. Is this the city that thou hast chosen to put the name there? And shall it be thus abandoned? He neither complains of God for what he had done, nor prescribes to God what he should do, but desires he would behold their case, and is pleased to think that he does behold it. Whatever trouble we are in, upon a personal or public account, we may comfort ourselves with this, that God sees it, and sees how to remedy it.

5. He seems desirous to let further into the meaning of the order that God had now given him, as to the purchase of the field: (v. 25.) "Though the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans, no man is likely to enjoy what he has, yet that hast said unto me, Buy thee the field." As soon as he understood that it was the mind of God, he did it, and made no objections, was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; but when he had done it, he desired better to understand why God had ordered him to do it, because the thing looked strange and unaccountable. Note, Though we are bound to follow God with an implicit obedience, yet we should endeavour that it may be more and more intelligent obedience. We must never dispute God's statutes and judgments, but we may and must inquire, What mean these statutes and judgments? Deut. vi. 20.

26. Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, 27. Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me? 28. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it. 29. And the Chaldeans, that fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it, with the houses upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink-offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger. 30. For the children of Israel, and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the Lord. 31. For his city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury, from the day that they built it, even unto this day, that I should remove it from before my face; 32. Because of all the evil of the children of Israel, and of the children of Judah, which they have done to
provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 33. And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction. 34. But they set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to defile it. 35. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. 36. And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, wherof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence; 37. Behold, I will gather them out of all countries whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: 38. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: 39. And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: 40. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. 41. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart, and with my whole soul. 42. For thus saith the LORD, Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. 43. And fields shall be bought in this land, wherof ye say, It is desolate without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans. 44. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal them, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the Lord.

We have here God's return to Jeremiah's prayer, designed to quiet his mind, and make him easy; and it is a full discovery of the purposes of God's wrath against the present generation, and the purposes of his grace concerning the future generations. Jeremiah knew not how to sing both of mercy and judgment, but God here teaches to sing unto him of both.

When we know not how to reconcile one word of God with another, we may yet be sure that both are true, both of pure and of most good, and not one iota of either shall fail to the ground. When Jeremiah was ordered to buy the field in Anathoth, he was willing to hope that God was about to revoke the sentence of his wrath, and to order the Chaldeans to raise the siege. "No," says God, "the execution of the sentence shall go on, Jerusalem shall be laid in ruins." Note, Assuming the preexistence of certain evidences, we may not be interpreted as securities from present troubles. But, let Jeremiah should think that his being ordered to buy this field intimated that all the mercy God had in store for his people, after their return, was only that they should have the possession of their own land again; he further acquaints him that that was but a type and figure of these spiritual blessings which should then be abundantly bestowed upon them, unspeakably more valuable than fields and vineyards. So that in this word of the Lord, which came here to Jeremiah, first as dreadful threatening, and then as precious promises as perhaps any we have in the Old Testament; life and death, good and evil, are here set before us; let us consider and choose wisely.

1. The ruin of Judah and Jerusalem is here pronounced; the decree is gone forth, and shall not be recalled. 1. God here asserts his own sovereignty and power; (v. 27.) Behold, I am Jehovah, a self-existent, self-sufficient Being; I am that I am; I am the God of all flesh, of all mankind; here called flesh, because weak, and unable to contend with God, (Ps. 89.4.) and because wicked and corrupt, and unapt to comply with God. God is the Creator of all, and makes what use he pleases of all. He that is the God of Israel is the God of all flesh, and of the spirits of all flesh; and, if Israel were cast off, could raise up a people to his name out of some other nation. If he be the God of all flesh, he may well ask, Is anything too hard for me? What can he do, from whom all the powers of men are derived, on whom they depend, and by whom all their actions are directed and governed? Whatever he designs to do, whether in wrath or in mercy, nothing can hinder him, or defeat his designs. 2. He abides by what he had often said of the destruction of Jerusalem by the king of Babylon; (v. 28.) I will give this city into his hand, now that I have grasped it, and him that shall take it, and make a prey of it, v. 29. The Chaldeans shall make set fire to it, shall burn it up, and all the houses in it, God's house not excepted, nor the king's neither. 3. He assigns the reason for these severe proceedings against the city that had been so much in his favour. It is sin, it is that, and nothing else, that ruins it. (1.) They were impudent and daring in sin. They had provoked God to wrath, as men ashamed or afraid of being discovered, but upon the tops of their houses, (v. 29.) in defiance of God's justice. (2.) They designed an affront to God herein. They did it to provoke me to anger, v. 29. They have only provoked me to anger with the works of their hands, v. 30. They could not promise themselves any pleasure, profit, or honour out of it, but designed an affront to God, and again, (v. 32.) All the evil which they had done was to provoke me to anger. They knew he was a jealous God in the matters of his worship, and there they resolved to try his jealousy and dare him to his face. Jerusalem has been to me a provocation of my anger and fury, v. 31. Their conduct was so very Hateful to God. They have done evil before me from their youth, ever since they were first formed into a pec-
JEREMIAH, XXXII.

JEREMIAH, God is it, Molech, was the holy city, it has been a provocation to the holy God from the day that they built it, even to this day, v. 31. What reason have we to lament the little honour God has from this world, and the great dishonesty that is done him, when even in Judah, where he is known and his name is great, and in Salem where his tabernacle is, there was always that found, that was a provocation to him? (4.) All orders and degrees of men contributethem, and God had not, and therefore were justly involved in the common ruin. Not only the children of Israel, that had revolted from the temple, but the children of Judah too, that still adhered to it. Not only the common people, the men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, but those that should have repaired and restrained sin in others, were themselves ringleaders in it, their kings and princes, their priests and prophets. (5.) God had again and again called them to repentance, but they turned a deaf ear to his calls, and rudely turned their back on him that called them, though he was their Master, to whom they were bound in duty, and their Benefactor, to whom they were bound in gratitude and interest, v. 33. “I taught them better manners, with as much care as ever any parent taught a child, rising up early, and teaching them.” (6.) There was in their idolatry an impious contempt of God, for, (v. 34.) They set their abominations, their idols, which they knew to be in the highest degree abominable to God, they set them in the house which is called by my name, to defile it. They had their idols not only in their high places and groves, but even in God’s temple, and it was designed for their own good. (7.) They were guilty of the most unnatural cruelty. They offered children, for they sacrificed them to Molech, v. 35. Thus because they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, but changed his glory into shame, they were justly given up to vile affections, and stript of natural ones, and their glory was turned into shame.

And lastly, What was the consequence of all this? [1.] They caused Judah to sin, v. 35. The whole country was infected with the contagious idolatries and iniquities of Jerusalem. [2.] They brought ruin upon themselves. It was as if they had done it on purpose that God should remove them from before his face; (v. 31.) they would throw themselves out of his favour. [3.] The restoration of Judah and Jerusalem is but the shadow of that, v. 36. God will in judgment remember mercy, and there will a time come, a set time, to favour Zion.

Observe, 1. The despair to which this people were now at length brought. When the judgment was threatened at a distance, they had no fear; when it attacked them, they had no hope. They saw the courtiers of the court, (v. 36.) It shall be delivered into the hands of the Chaldeans. God will deliver by any cowardice or ill conduct of ours, but by the sword, famine, and pestilence. Concerning the country, they said, with vexation, (v. 43.) It is desolate without man or beast, there is no relief, there is no remedy. It is given into the hand of the Chaldeans. Note, Deep security commonly ends in deep despair; whereas those that keep up holy fear at all times, have a good hope to support themselves in the worst of times.

2. The hope that God gives them of mercy which he had in store for them hereafter. Though their captivity must fall in captivity, yet their children after them should again see this good land, and the goodness of God in it. (1.) They shall be brought up from their captivity, and shall come, and settle again in this land, v. 57. They had been under God’s anger and fury, and great wrath; but now they shall partake of his grace, and love, and great favour. He had drawn them as a flock out of the midst of the sheep, dispersed by the enemies; these that fled dispersed themselves; those that fell into the enemies’ hands were dispersed by them, in policy, to prevent combinations among them. God’s hand was in both: but now God will find them out, and gather them out of all the countries where they were driven, as he promised in the law, (Deut. xxx. 4.) and the saints had prayed, Ps. cxi. 5. Neh. i. 9. He had banished them, but he will bring them again to this place, which they could not but have an affection for. For many years past, while they were in their own land, they were continually exposed, and terrified with the alarms of war; but now I will cause them to dwell safely. Being reformed, and returned to God, neither their own consciences within, nor their enemies without, shall be able to make them tremble for fear of them. I will plant them in this land assuredly; not only I will certainly do it, but they shall here enjoy a holy security and repose, and they shall take root here, shall be planted in stability, and not again be unixed and unshaken.

(2.) God will renew his covenant with them, a covenant of grace, the blessings of which are spiritual, and such as will work good things in them, to qualify them for the great things God intended to do for them. It is called an everlasting covenant, (v. 40.) not only because God will be for ever faithful to it, but because the consequences of it will be for everlasting. For, doubtless, here the promises look further than to Israel according to the flesh, and are sure to all believers, to every Israelite indeed. Good Christians may apply them to themselves, and use them with respect to the Church, as the benefit of them, and take the comfort of them. [1.] God will own them for his, and make over himself to them; (v. 38.) They shall be my people. He will make them his, by working in them all the characters and dispositions of his people, and then he will protect and guide and govern them as his people. And, to make them truly, completely, and eternally happy, I will be their God. They shall serve and worship God as theirs, and cleave to him only, and he will approve himself theirs. All he is, all he has, shall be engaged and employed for their good.

[2.] God will give them a heart to fear him, v. 39. That which he requires of those whom he takes into covenant with him as his people, is, that they fear him. How will these, that were holy and good, and well-fashioned. It is repeated again, (v. 40.) I will put my fear in their hearts, work in them gracious principles and dispositions, that shall influence and govern their whole conversation. Teachers may put good things into our heads, but it is God only that can put them into our hearts, that can work in us both to will and to do.
[3.] He will give them one heart and one way. In order to their walking in one way, he will give them one heart; as the heart is, so will the way be; and one way will be shewn them in which all of each of them one with themselves; one heart is the same with a new heart, Ezek. xi. 19. The heart is then one, when it is fully determined for God, and entirely devoted to God; when the eye is single, and God's glory alone aimed at; when our hearts are fixed, trusting in God, and we are uniform and universal in our obedience to him: then the heart is one, and in one way; and unless the heart is steady, the going will not be steadfast. From this promise we may take direction and encouragement to pray, with David, (Ps. lxxxvi. 11.) Untie my heart to fear thy name; for God says, I will give them one heart, that they may fear me. Secondly, They shall be all of them one with each other. All good Christians shall be incorporated into one body, Jews and Gentiles shall become one sheet-fold; and they shall all, as far as they are sanctified, have a disposition to love one another; the gospel they profess, having in it the strongest inducements to mutual love, and the Spirit that dwells in them, being the Spirit of love. Though they may have different apprehensions about lesser things, they shall be all one in the great things of God, being renewed after the same image; though they may have many paths, and paths, they will all lead to that goal, and to that end of the gospel, which is one thing. [4.] He will effectually provide for their perseverance in grace, and the perpetuating of the covenant between him and them. They would have been happy when they were first planted in Canaan, like Adam in paradise, if they had not departed from God. And therefore now that they are restored to their happiness, they shall be confirmed in it, by the preventer of all their departures from God, and this will complete their bliss. First, God will never leave nor forsake them; I will not turn away from them to do good. Earthly princes are fickle, and their greatest favourites have fallen under their frowns; but God's mercy endures for ever; whom he loves, he loves to the end. God may seem to turn from his people, (Isa. liv. 8.) but even then he does not turn from doing and designing them good. Secondly, They shall never leave nor forsake him; that is the thing we are in danger of; we have no reason to distrust God's fidelity and constancy, but our own. And therefore it is here promised, that God will give them a heart to fear him far ever, all days, to be in his fear every day, and all the day long, (Prov. xxviii. 17.) and to continue so long as the sun shall shine, and therefore shall have a principle into their hearts, that they shall not depart from him. Even those who have given up their names to God, if they be left to themselves, will depart from him; but the fear of God, ruling in the heart, will prevent their departure. That, and nothing else, will do it. If we continue close and faithful to God, it is owing purely to his almighty grace, and not to any strength or resolution of our own. [5.] He will entitle a blessing upon their seed, will give them grace to fear him, for the good of them, and of their children after them. As their departures from God had been to the prejudice of their children, so their adherence to God should be to the advantage of their children. We cannot better conclude the goodness of his mercy, in keeping us up, and keeping up, the fear and worship of God in our families. [6.] He will take a pleasure in their prosperity, and will do every thing to advance it; (v. 41.) I will rejoice over them to do them good. God will therefore do them good, because he rejoices over them: they are dear to him, he makes his boast of them, and therefore will not only do them good, but will delight in doing them good. When he punishes them, it is with reluctance; How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? But when he restores them it is with satisfaction: I will rejoice over them, to do them good. We ought therefore to serve him with pleasure, and to rejoice in all opportunities of serving him. He is himself a cheerful Giver, and therefore loves a cheerful servant. I will plant them (says God) with my whole heart, and with my whole soul. He will be intent upon it, and take delight in it: he will make it the business of his providence to settle them again in Canaan, and the various dispensation of providence shall tend to that end. All these shall appear at last so to have been working for the good of the church, that it will be said, The Governor of the world is entirely taken up with the care of his church. [7.] These promises shall as surely be performed as the foregoing threatenings were, and the accomplishment of those, notwithstanding the security of the people, might confirm their expectation of the performance of these, notwithstanding their present desponding; (v. 42.) As I have brought all this great evil upon them, pursuant to the threatenings, and for the glory of divine justice, so I will bring upon them all this good, pursuant to the promise, and for the glory of divine mercy. He that is faithful to his threatenings will much more be so to his promises; and the more they are opposed and denied, the stronger will the effect be in the end. The churches shall have rest after the days of adversity. [8.] As an earnest of all this, houses and lands shall again take a good price in Judah and Jerusalem, and though now they are a drug, there shall again be a sufficient number of purchasers; (v. 43, 44.) Fields shall be bought in this land, and people will concern themselves for the purchase of them; and the purchase-money shall be paid in all cities, and paid over in their proper places; (Jer. xxxii. 9.) there will no longer be bought and sold, in the city of Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, nor by the Jews, nor by the nation. And this is confirmed by the way and manner of the payment, that is, the recompense of the land; it is paid over in the churches, and to the poor, and to the widow, and the fatherless, and the stranger, who are always the objects of charity. And this will be the rule in all others, and to all the churches in all ages. The churches shall have rest after the days of adversity. 

CHAP. XXXIII.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the foregoing, viz. concerning the future or the time of the restoration of the Jews, notwithstanding the present desolation of their country, and dispersions of their people. And these promises have, both in type and tendency, a reference at the same time, and a double effect to the whole gymnasty of the two sees of the church, and to the whole Jew, and the Gentile. The former is the second edition of the Jewish church was at length to resign its dignities and privileges. It is here promised, I. That the city shall be rebuilt and re-established in its former state, v. 1. - 6. II. That the captives, having their sins pardoned, shall be restored, v. 7, 8, 9. III. That this shall redound very much to the glory of God, v. 9. IV. That the country shall have both joy and glory, v. 10, 11, 12. V. That the city shall be made for the coming of the Messiah, v. 15, 16. VI. That the house of David, the house of Levi, and the house of Israel, shall flourish again, and be established, and all the tribes of the Lord's kingdom; and the church, and the church, and the church shall flourish, and be established, and all the tribes of the Lord's kingdom. A gospel-ministry and the gospel-church shall continue while the world stands, v. 17, 18. 1. Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah the second
time, while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison, saying, 2. Thus saith the Lord, the maker thereof, the Lord that formed it, to establish it; the Lord is his name; 3. Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. 4. For thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, which are thrown down by the mounts, and by the sword; 5. They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but it is to fill them with the dead bodies of men, whom I have slain in mine anger, and in my fury, and for all whose wickedness I have hid my face from this city. 6. Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth. 7. And I will cause the captivity of Judah, and the captivity of Israel, to return, and will build them as at the first. 8. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. 9. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness, and for all the prosperity, that I procure unto it.

Observe here,
1. The date of this comfortable prophecy which God intrusted Jeremiah with. It is not exact in the time, only that it was after the Chaldean history; but the events were still growing worse and worse; it is the second time; God speaketh once, yea, twice, for the encouragement of his people. We are not only so disobedient, that we have need of precept upon precept to bring us to our duty, but so distrustful, that we have need of promise upon promise to bring us to our comfort. This word, as the former, came to Jeremiah when he was in prison. Note, No confinement can deprive God's people of his presence; no locks or bars can shut out his gracious visits; nay, oftentimes as their afflictions abound, their consolations much more abound, and they have the most reviving communications of his favour then, when the world frown upon them. Paul's sweetest epistles were those that bare date out of a prison.
2. No prophecy itself. A great deal of comfort is wrapt up in it for the relief of the captives, to keep them from sinking into despair. Observe,
1. Who it is that secures this comfort to them, v. 2. It is the Lord, the Maker thereof, the Lord that framed it. He is the Maker and Former of heaven and earth, and therefore has all power in his hands; so it refers to Jeremiah's prayer, ch. xxxiii. 2. He is the Maker and Former of Jerusalem, of Zion, built them at first, and therefore can rebuild them, built them for his own praise, and therefore will. He formed it, to establish it, and therefore it shall be established till these things be introduced, which cannot be shaken, but shall remain for ever. He is the Maker and Former of this promise; he has laid the scheme for Jerusalem's restoration, and he that has formed it will establish it, he that has made the promise will make it good; for Jehovah is his name; God giving being to his promises by the performance of them. All his doings as he has done that name, (Exod. vi. 3.) a perfecting God; when the heavens and the earth were finished, then, and not till then, the Creator is called Jehovah, Gen. i. 1.
2. How this comfort must be obtained and fetched in by prayer; v. 3. Call upon me, and I will answer thee. The prophet, having received some intimations of this kind, must be humbly engaged with God for further discoveries of his kind intentions. He had prayed, (ch. xxxii. 16.) but he must pray again. Note, Those that expect to receive comforts from God must continue instant in prayer; we must call upon him, and then he will answer us; Christ himself must ask, and it shall be given him, Ps. ii. 8. I will show thee great and mighty things, give thee a clear and full prospect of them; hidden things, which, though in part discovered already, yet thou knowest not, thou canst not understand, or give credit to. Or, this may refer not only to the prediction of these things, which Jeremiah, if he desire it, shall be favoured with, but to the performance of the things themselves, which the people of God, encouraged by this prediction, must pray for. Note, Promises are given, not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, prayer. See Ezek. xxxvi. 37.
3. How deplorable the condition of Jerusalem was, which made it necessary that such comforts as these should be provided for it; and notwithstanding which, its restoration should be brought about in due time; v. 6. The houses of this city, not excepting those of the kings of Judah, are thrown down by the mounts, or engines of batter, and by the sword, or by human hands. It is the same word that is used, Ezek. xxxvi. 9. With his axes he shall break down thy towers. The strongest, stateliest houses, and those that were best furnished, were levelled with the ground. The fifth verse comes in a parenthesis, giving a further instance of the present calamitous state of Jerusalem. They that came to fight with the Chaldeans, to beat them off from Jerusalem, died in their sleep, and were left as a prey to the enemy to be more fierce and furious in their assaults, so that the houses in Jerusalem were filled with the dead bodies of men, who died of the wounds they received in sallying out upon the besiegers. God says, that they were such as he had shewn in his anger, for the enemies' sword was his sword, and their anger his anger. But it seems, the men that were slain were generally such as had distinguished themselves by their wickedness, for they were the very men for whose wickedness God did now hide himself from this city; so that he was just in all he brought upon them.
4. What the blessings are which God has in store for Judah and Jerusalem, such as will redress all their grievances. 22. Is it the state diseased? Is it wounded? God will provide effectually for the healing of it, though the disease was thought mortal and incurable, ch. viii. 22. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; but, (v. 6.) I will bring it health and cure, I will prevent the death, remove the sickness, and set all to rights again," ch. xxx. 17. Note, Be the case ever so desperate, if God undertake the cure, he will effect it. The sin of Jerusalem was the sickness of it; (Isa. i. 6.) its reformation therefore will be its recovery. And the following words tell us how that is wrought; "I will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth; I will give it them in due time, and give them an encouraging prospect of it in the mean time." Peace stands here
for all good; peace and truth are peace according to the promise, and in pursuance of that; or, peace and truth are peace and the true religion; peace and the true worship of God, in opposition to the many falsehoods and deceits by which they have been led away from God. We may apply it more generally, and observe, [1.] That peace and truth are the great subject-matter of divine revelation. These promises here lead us to the gospel of Christ, and in that God has revealed to us peace and truth, the method of true peace; truth to direct us, peace to make us easy. Grace and truth, and abundance of both, come by Jesus Christ. Peace and truth are the life of the soul, and Christ came, that we might have that life, and might have it more abundantly. Christ rules by the power of truth, (John xviii. 17.) and by it he gives abundance of peace, Ps. lxxxv. 7.—lxxxvi. 10. [2.] That the divine revelation of peace and truth brings health and cure to all those that by faith receive it: it heals the soul of the diseases it has contracted, as it is a means of sanctification, John xvii. He sent his word, and healed them. And it puts the soul into good order, and keeps it in frame, and fit for the employments and enjoyments of the spiritual and divine life.

(2.) Are they scattered and enslaved, and is their nation laid in ruins? "I will cause their captivity to return, (v. 7.) both that of Israel and that of Judah;" (for though those who returned under Zerubbabel were Jews, and the true people of God, yet afterward many of all the other tribes returned,) and I will rebuild them, as I built them at first. When they by repentance do their first works, God will by their restoration do his first works.

(3.) Is sin the procuring cause of all their troubles? That shall be pardoned and subsided, and so they shall be free. By sin they are become filthy, and odious to God’s holiness, but God will cleanse them, and purify them from their iniquity; as those that were ceremonially unclean, and were therefore shut out from the tabernacle, when they were sprinkled with the water of purification, had liberty of access to it again, so had they to their own land and the privileges of it, when God had cleansed them from their iniquities. In allusion to that sprinkling, David prays, Purge me with hyssop. [2.] By sin they are become guilty, and obnoxious to his justice; but he will pardon all their iniquities, will remove the punishment to which for sin they were bound ever. All who by sanctifying grace are cleansed from the fifth of sin, by pardoning mercy are freed from the guilt of it.

(4.) Have both their sins and their sufferings turned to the dishonour of God? Their reformation and restoration shall redound as much to his praise, v. 9. Jerusalem, thus rebuilt, Judah, thus re-peopled, shall be to me a name of joy, as pleasing to God as ever they have been provoking, and a praise and an honour before all the nations. They, being thus cleansed, shall glorify God by their services, and he shall glorify himself by his favours. This renewed nation shall be as much a reputation to religion as formerly it has been a reproach to it. The nation shall hear all of the good that God has wrought in them by his grace, and of all the good he has wrought for them by his providence. The wonders of their return out of Babylon shall make as great a noise in the world as ever the return out of Egypt did. And they shall fear and tremble for all this goodness. [1.] The people of God themselves shall fear and tremble; they shall be much surprized at it, shall be afraid of offending so good a God, and of forfeiting his favour, Hos. iii. 5. They shall fear the Lord and his goodness. [2.] The neighbouring nations shall fear because of the prosperity of Jerusalem; shall look upon the growing greatness of the Jewish nation as really formidable, and shall be afraid of making them their enemies. When the church is fair as the moon, and as white as snow, so hard are the people, she is terrible as an army with banners.

10. Thus saith the Lord, Again there shall be heard in this place (which ye say shall be desolate without man and without beast, even in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, that are desolate without man, and without inhabitant, and without beast,) the voice of joy, and the voice of gladness; the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride; the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts: for the Lord is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the Lord. 12. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Again in this place, which is desolate without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, shall be a habitation of shepherds causing their flocks to lie down. 13. In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale, and in the cities of the south, and in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, shall the flocks pass under the hands of him that telleth them, saith the Lord. 14. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel, and to the house of Judah. 15. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. 16. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.

Here is a further prediction of the happy state of Judah and Jerusalem after their glorious return on of captivity, issuing gloriously at length in the kingdom of the Messiah. 1. It is promised, that the people who were long in sorrow, shall again be filled with joy. Every one concluded, now, that the captivity would be for ever desolate, that no beast should be found in the land of Judah, no inhabitants in the streets of Jerusalem, and, consequently, there would be nothing but universal and perpetual melancholy; (v. 10.) yet, though weeping may endure for a time, joy will return. It was threatened, (ch. vii. 34. and xvi. 9.) that the voice of joy and gladness should cease there; but here it is promised that they shall revive again, that the voice of joy and gladness should be heard there, because the captivity shall be returned; for then was their mouth filled with laughter, Ps. cxxvi. 1. 2. (1.) There shall be common joy there, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride; marriages shall again be celebrated, as formerly, with songs, which in Babylon they had laid asid,
for their harps were hung on the willow trees. (2.) There shall be religious joy there; temple-songs shall be revived, the Lord’s songs, which they could not sing in a strange land. There shall be heard, in their private houses, and in the cities of Judah, as well as in the temple, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts. Note, Nothing is more agreeable to the Lord’s heart, than the public promiscuous praise of his people. This shall complete the mercy of their return and restoration, that with it they shall have hearts to be thankful for it, and give God the glory of it, the glory both of the power and of the goodness by which it is effected; they shall praise him both as the Lord of hosts, and as the God who is good, and who is the God of hosts. This, though a song of old, yet, being sung upon this happy occasion, will be a new song. We find this literally fulfilled at their return out of Babylon, Ezra iii. 11. They sang together in praising the Lord, because he is good, for his mercy endures for ever. The public worship of God shall be diligently and constantly attended upon; They shall bring the sacrifice of praise to the house of the Lord. All the sacrifices were indeed a shadow, but they were the type of the spiritual sacrifice of humble adorations and joyful thanksgivings, the calves of our lips, (Hos. xiv. 2.) which shall please the Lord better than an ox or a bullock. The Jews say, that in the days of the Messiah all sacrifices shall cease, but the sacrifice of praise, and to those days this promise has a further reference. (2.) The peace of the country. It shall not be a habitation of soldiers, nor shall there be tents and barrack set up to lodge them, but there shall be shepherd’s tents; for they shall hear no more the alarms of war, nor shall there be any to make even the shepherds afraid. See Ps. cxlv. 13, 14. (3.) The king and court. They shall return in their original plainness and simplicity, from which, in the corrupt ages, they had sadly degenerated. The seed of Jacob, in their beginning, gloried in this, that they were shepherds, (Gen. xlvii. 3.) and so they shall now be again, giving themselves wholly to that innocent employment, causing their flocks to lie down, (v. 12.) and to pass under the hands of him that telleth them; (v. 13.) for though their flocks are numerous, they are not numberless, nor shall they omit to number them, that they may know if any be missing, and may seek after it. Note, It is the prudence of those who have ever so much of the world, to keep an account of what they have. Some think that they pass under the hand of him that telleth them, that they may be tided, Lev. xxvii. 32. These are the words we have, when God has had his due out of it. Now because it seemed incredible that a people, reduced as now they were, should ever recover such a degree of peace and plenty as this, here is subjuncted a general ratification of these promises; (v. 14.) I will perform that good thing which I have promised. Though the prophets sometimes work slowly towards an accomplishment, it is not to work amiss. The days will come, though they are long in coming. 3. To crown all these blessings which God has in store for them, here is a promise of the Messiah, and of that everlasting righteousness which he should bring in, (v. 15, 16.) and, probably, this is that good things, that great good thing, which, in the latter days, days that were yet to come, God would perform, as he had promised to Judah and Israel, and which their return out of captivity, and their settlement again in their own land, respected. For the prophecy concerns the Messiah, and much else, and it is one of the famous periods, Matth. i. 17. This was the promise of the Messiah we had before; (ch. xxiii. 5, 6.) and there it came in as a confirmation of the promise of the shepherds which God would set over them, which would make one think that the promise here concerning the shepherds and their flocks, which introduces it, is to be understood figuratively, Christ is here professed to be the Branch of righteousness, not a usurper, for he grows up unto David, descends from his loins, with whom the covenant of royalty was made, and is that Seed with whom that covenant should be established, so that his title is unexceptionable. (2.) As a righteous King, righteous in enacting laws, waging wars, and giving judgment; righteous in vindicating those that suffer wrong, and punishing and avenging the injuries done to them. The Lord shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. This may point at Zerubbabel in the type, who governed with equity, not as Jehoiakim had done; (ch. xxii. 17.) but it has a further reference to him to whom all judgment is committed, and who shall judge the world in righteousness. (3.) As a King that shall protect his subjects from all injury. By him Judah shall be saved from every one that calleth upon his name, Jerusalem shall dwell safely, quiet from the fear of evil, and enjoying a holy security and sincerity of mind, in a dependence upon the conduct of this Prince of peace, this Prince of their peace. (4.) As a King that shall be praised by his subjects; This is the name whereby they shall call him; (so the Chaldee reads it, the Syrian, and vulgar Latin) this name of his they shall celebrate as sacred, and give it to him, and by this name they shall call upon him. It may be read, more agreeably to the original, This is he who shall call her, The Lord our Righteousness, as Moses’s altar is called Jehovah-nissi, (Exod. xvii. 15.) and Jerusalem, Jehovah-shammah, (Ezek. xviii. 35.) intimating that they glory in Jehovah as present with them, and their Banner; so here the city is called, The Lord our Righteousness, because they glory in Jehovah as their Righteousness. This was before said to be the name of Christ, (says Mr. Gataker,) is here made the name of Jerusalem, the city of the Messiah, the church of Christ. He it is that imparts righteousness to her, for he is made of God to us righteousness, and she, by bearing that name, professes to have her whole righteousness, not from herself, but from him. In the Lord have I righteousness and strength. (Isa. xlii. 14.) and we are made the righteousness of God in him. The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall have this name of the Messiah so much in their mouths, that they shall themselves be called by it. 17. For thus saith the Lord, David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; 18. Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me, to offer burnt-offerings, and to kindle meat-offerings, and to do sacrifice continually. 19. And the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah, saying, 29. Thus saith the Lord, If you can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and
night in their season; 21. Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers. 22. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured; so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me. 23. Moreover, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, 24. Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the Lord hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? Thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them. 25. Thus saith the Lord, If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth, 26. Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.

Three of God's covenants, that of royalty with David and his seed, that of the priesthood with Aaron on the Jewish side, and that of people with Abraham, and his seed, seemed to have been all broken and lost while the captivity lasted; but it is here promised, that notwithstanding that interruption and discontinuance for a time, they shall all three take place again, and the true intents and meaning of them all shall be abundantly answered in the New Testament blessings typified by those conferred on the Jews after their return out of captivity. 1. The covenant of royalty shall be secured, and the promises of it shall have their full accomplishment, in the kingdom of Christ, the Son of David, v. 17. The throne of Israel was overthrown in the captivity, the crown was fallen from their head, there was not a man to sit on the throne of Israel, Jeconiah was written childless. After their return, the throne of David was made a figure again; but that the Messiah that this promise is performed, that David shall never want a man to sit on the throne of Israel; and that David shall have always a Son to reign upon his throne. For as long as the Man Christ Jesus sits on the right hand of the throne of God, rules the world, and rules it for the good of the church, to which he is a quickening Head, and glorified Head over all things, as long as he is King upon the holy hill of Zion, David does not want a successor, nor is the covenant with him broken. When the First-begetten was brought into the world, it was declared concerning him, that the Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, Luke i. 33. 2. The accomplishment of this, it is promised, (1.) That the covenant with David shall be as firm as the ordinances of heaven; to the stability of which that of God's promise is compared, ch. xxxii. 35, 36. There is a covenant of nature, by which the common course of providence is settled, and on which it is founded, here called, a covenant of the day and the night, (v. 26, 25.) because that is one of the articles of it. There shall be day and night in their season, according to the distinction put between them in the creation, when God divided between the light and the darkness, and estab-

lished their mutual succession, and a government to each, that the sun should rule by day, and the moon and stars by night, (Gen. i, 4, 5, 16,) which establishment was renewed after the flood, (Gen. viii. 22.) and has continued ever since, Ps. xix. 2. The morning and the evening have both of them their regular outgoings; (Ps. lxxv. 8.) the day's spring knows its place, knows its time, and keeps its day, so the shadow of the evening; and while the world stands, this course shall not be altered; (Lev. xxvi. 32.) that covenant shall not be broken. The ordinances of heaven and earth. (of this communication between heaven and earth, the dominion of these ordinances of heaven upon the earth,) which God has appointed, (v. 25, compare Job xxxvi. 33.) shall never be disappointed. Thus firm shall the covenant of redemption stand, both with the Redeemer to God's Servant, but David our King, v. 21. That intimates that Christ shall have a church on earth to the world's end, he shall see a seed in which he shall prolong his days till time and days shall be no more. Christ's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and when the end cometh, and not till then, it shall be delivered up to God, even the Father. But it intimates that the condition of it in this world shall be intermixed and counteracted, prevented and confounded, as this ought to be in the other, as light and darkness, day and night. But this is plainly taught us, that, as sure as we may be, that though the sun will set to-night, it will rise again to-morrow morning, whether we live to see it or no, so sure we may be, that though the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world may for a time be clouded and eclipsed by corruptions and persecutions, and yet shall shine with again, and recover its lustre, in the time appointed. (2.) That the seed of David shall be as numerous as the host of heaven, the spiritual seed of the Messiah, that shall be born to him by the efficacy of his gospel, and his Spirit working with it, from the womb of the morning he shall have the dew of their youth, to be his willing priests, Ps. ex. 3. Christ's seed are not, as David's were, his successors, but his subjects; yet the day is coming when they also shall reign with him; (v. 22.) As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, so will I multiply the seed of David, so that there shall be no danger of the kingdom's being extinct, or extinguished for want of heirs. The children are numerous; and if children, then heirs. 2. The covenant of priesthood shall be secured, and the promise of it shall have its full accomplishment. This seemed likewise to be forgotten during the captivity, when there was no altar, no temple-service, for the priests to attend upon; but this also shall revive. It did so; immediately upon their coming back to Jerusalem, there were priests and Levites ready to offer burnt-offerings, and to do sacrifice continually, (Ezra ii. 2, 3.) as he here promised, v. 18. But the priesthood soon grew corrupt, the covenant of Levi was forgot, (as appears Mal. ii. 8.) and in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans it came to a final period. We must therefore look elsewhere for the performance of this work, that the covenant with the Levites, the priests, God's ministers, shall be as firm, and last as long, as the covenant with the day and the night, and the sun and moon, (Gen. viii. 22.) and the accomplishment. (1.) In the priesthood of Christ, which superseded that of Aaron, and is the substance of that shadow. While that great High Priest of our profession is always appearing in the presence of God for us, presenting the virtue of his blood by which he made atonement in the incense of his intercession, it may truly be said, that the Levites do not want a man to reign over them, by 1. Thess. iv. 7. Heb. viii. 3. He is a Priest for ever. The covenant of the priesthood is called a covenant of peace, (Numb. xxv. 12.) of life and peace, Mal. ii. 5. Now we
are sure that this covenant is not broken, or in the least weakened, while Jesus Christ is himself our Life and our Peace. This covenant of priesthood is here again and again joined with that of royalty, for Christ is a Priest upon his throne, as Melchizedek. (2.) In a settled gospel-ministry. While there are faithful ministers to preside in religious assemblies, and teach the simple, and to make them at a banquet of prayer and praise, the priests, the Levites do not want successors, and such as have obtained a more excellent ministry. The apostle makes those that preach the gospel, to come in the room of those that served at the altar, 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14. (3.) In all true believers, who are a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood, (1 Pet. ii. 5, 9.) who are made to God, and of God, and as the Levites offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, and themselves, in the first place, living sacrifices. Of these Levites, this promise here must be understood, (v. 22.) that they shall be as numerous as the sand of the sea, the same that is promised concerning Israel in general: (Gen. xxii. 17.) for all God's spiritual Israel are spiritual priests, Rev. v. 9, 10.—vii. 9.

5. The covenant of peculiarity likewise shall be secured, and the promises of that covenant shall have their full accomplishment in the gospel-Israel. Observe, (1.) How this covenant was looked upon as broken during the captivity, v. 24. God asks the prophet, "Hast thou not heard, and dost thou not consider, what this people have spoken?" Either the enemies of Israel, who triumphed in the extinction of a portion of the land, made a noise in the world, or the unbelieving Israelites themselves, this people, among whom thou dwellest, they have broken covenant with God, and then quarrel with him, as if he had not dealt faithfully with them. The two families which the Lord hath chosen, Israel and Judah, whereas they were but one when he chose them, he hath even cast them off. "Thus have the heathens cast them off, despising them, and despising the privilege of being my people, as if it were a privilege of no value at all. The neighbouring nations despised them, as now no more a nation, but the ruins of a nation, and looked upon all their honour as laid in the dust; but, (2.) See how firm the covenant stands notwithstanding, as firm as that which daw and night; sooner will God suffer day and night to cease, than he will cast away the seed of Jacob, or the seed of Israel. God referr'd to himself, and to all Jacob according to the flesh, for they are cast away, but to the Christian church, in which all these promises were to be lodged, as appears by the apostle's discourse, Rom. xi. 1, &c. Christ is that Seed of David, that is to be perpetual Dictator to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and as this people shall never want such a king, so this king shall never want such a people. Christ shall continue in the dominion of Christ, and the subjection of Christians to him, till day and night come to an end. And as a pledge of this, that promise is again repeated. I will cause their captivity to return; and, having brought them back, I will have mercy on them. Whom this promise refers to, appears, Gal. vi. 16, where all that walk according to the gospel-rule, are made to be the Israel of God, on whom peace and mercy shall be.

CHAP. XXXIV.

In this chapter, we have two messages which God sent by Jeremiah. 1. One, to foretell the fate of Zedekiah king of Judah, that he should fall into the hands of the king of Babylon, that he should live a captive, and should at his pleasure suffer any torture, v. 11. And so to bring to light, and to read the doom both of prince and people for their treacherous dealings with God, in bringing back their servants into bondage, whom they had released according to the law, and so paying fast and little with God. They had walked at all adventures with God, (v. 8. 11.) and therefore God would walk at all adventures with them, in bringing the Chaldean army upon them again, then when they began to hope that they were got clear of them, v. 12. 22.

1. The word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, (when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and all his army, and all the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion, and all the people, fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities thereof,) saying, 2. Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Go, and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah, and tell him; Thus saith the Lord. Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire. 3. And thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon. 4. Yet hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah king of Judah; Thus saith the Lord of thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword; 5. But thou shalt die in peace: and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they burn odours for thee; and they shall lament thee, saying, Ah, lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the Lord. 6. Then Jeremiah the prophet spake all these words unto Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem. 7. When the king of Babylon's army fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities of Judah that were left, against Laichish, and against Azekah: for these defended cities remained of the cities of Judah.

This prophecy concerning Zedekiah was delivered to Jeremiah, and by him to the parties concerned, before he was shut up in the prison. By this prediction here made the ground of his commitment, as appears by the recital of some passages out of it, ch. xxxiv. 4.

Observe, 1. The time when this message was sent to Zedekiah; it was when the king of Babylon, with all his forces, some out of all the kingdoms of the earth that were within his jurisdiction, fought against Jerusalem, and the cities thereof: (v. 1.) desiring to destroy them, having often wondered at them. The cities that now remain, and yet hold out, are named, (v. 7.) Laichish and Azekah. This intimates that things were now brought to the last extremity, and yet Zedekiah obstinately stood it out, his heart being hardened to his destruction.

2. The message itself that was sent him. (1.) Here is a threatening sentence, which is told that again when he had been often told before, that the city shall be taken by the Chaldeans, and burnt with fire, (v. 2.) that he shall himself fall into the enemy's hands, shall be made a prisoner, shall be brought before that furious prince Nebuchadnezzar, and be carried away captive into Babylon; (v. 3.) yet Ezekiel prophesied that he should not see Babylon; nor was he, for his eyes were put out. Ezek. xii. 13. This Zedekiah brought upon himself from God, and from Nebuchadnezzar, and from his breaking of his faith with him.
(2.) Here is a mixture of mercy. He shall die a captive, but he shall not die by the sword, he shall die a natural death; (v. 4.) he shall end his days with some comfort, shall die in peace. v. 5. He never had been one of the worst of the kings, but we are willing to hope that what evil he had done in the sight of the Lord, he repented of it in his captivity, as Manasseh had done, and it was forgiven to him; and, God being reconciled to him, he might truly be said to die in peace. Note, A man may die in a prison, and live in heaven, and die with his days with some reputation, more than one would expect, all things considered. He shall be buried with the burnings of his fathers, with the respect usually shown to their kings, especially those that had done good in Israel. It seems, in his captivity he had conducted himself so well toward his own people, that they were willing to do him this honour; and toward Nebuchadnezzar, that he suffered it to be done. If Zedekiah had continued in his prosperity, perhaps he would have grown worse, and would have departed at last without being desired; but his afflictions wrought such a change in him, that his death was looked upon as a great loss. It is better to live and die penitent in a prison, than live and die impenitent in a palace. They will lament him, as they did Manasseh. 

3. Jeremiah's faithfulness in delivering this message; though he knew it would be ungrateful to the king, and might prove, as indeed it did, dangerous to himself, (for he was clapped up for it,) yet he spake all these words to Zedekiah, v. 6. It is a mercy to great men to have those about them that will deal faithfully with them, and tell them the evil consequences of their evil courses, that they may reform, and live. 

8. This is the word that came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people which were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them; that every man should let his man-servant, and every man his maid-servant, being a Hebrew or a Hebrewess, go free; that none should serve himself of them, to wit, of a Jew his brother. 10. Now, when all the princes, and all the people which had entered into the covenant, heard that every one should let his man-servant, and every one his maid-servant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more; then they obeyed, and let them go. 11. But afterwards they turned, and caused the servants, and the handmaids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for handmaids. Therefore the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 13. Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, saying, 14. At the end of seven years, let ye go every man his brother a Hebrew, which hath been sold unto thee; and, when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee: but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear. 15. And ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour: and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name: 16. But ye turned, and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom ye had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. 18. And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof, 19. The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf; 20. I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life; and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth. 21. And Zedekiah king of Judah, and his princes, will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from you. 22. Behold, I will command, saith the Lord, and cause them to return to this city; and they shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire: and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant.

We have here another prophecy upon a particular occasion, the history of which we must take notice of, as necessary to give light to the prophecy. 1. When Jerusalem was closely besieged by the Chaldean army, the princes and people agreed upon a reformation in one instance, and that was concerning their servants. 2. The law of God was very express, that those of their own nation should not be held in servitude above seven years, but after they had served one
apprenticeship, they should be discharged, and have their liberty; yea, though they had sold themselves into servitude for the payment of their debts, or though they were sold by the judges for the punishment of their crimes. This difference was put between their brethren and strangers, that those of other nations, taken in war, or bought with money, might be held in perpetual slavery, they and theirs; but the Hebrews and their children should be bought free, and the longest. This God calls the covenant that he had made with them, when he 
brought them out of the land of Egypt, v. 13, 14. This was the first of the judicial laws which God gave them, (Exod. xxii. 2.) and there was good reason for that law.

(1.) God had put honour upon that nation, and he would have them thus to preserve the honour of that they had done, and to prove that he had saved them from the other nations. (2.) God had brought them out of slavery in Egypt, and he would have them thus to express their grateful sense of that favour, by letting those go, to whom their houses were houses of bondage, as Egypt had been to their forefathers.

This delivrance is therefore mentioned here, (v. 13.) as the ground of that law. Note, God's compassion to his people should engage us to make a sacrifice towards our benefactors, both in this world as we are released, forgive as we are forgiven, and relieve as we are relieved. And this is called a covenant: for our performance of the duty required is the condition of the continuance of the favours God has bestowed.

2. This law they, and their fathers did observe, their worldly profit swayed more with them than God's command or covenant. When those servants had lived seven years with them, they understood their business, and how to apply themselves to it, better than they did when they first came to them, and therefore they would then by no means part with them, though God himself by his law had made them free; Your fathers hearkened not to me in this matter, (v. 14.) so that from the days of their fathers they had been in this trespass; and they thought they might do it, because their fathers did it, and their servants had by disuse lost the benefit of the provision God made for them; whereas against an express law, especially against an express law of God, no custom, usage, or prescription, is to be admitted in plea. For this sin of theirs, and their fathers, God now brought them into servitude, and judg'd them.

3. When they were besieged, and closely shut in, by the army of the Chaldeans, they, being told of their fault in this matter, immediately reformed, and let go all their servants that were entitled to their freedom by the law of God; as Pharaoh, who, when the plague was upon him, consented to let the people go, and bound themselves in a covenant to do so. (1.) The prophets faithfully admonished that their brethren were in the same case, and that it was their duty that they should let their Hebrew servants go free, v. 10. They might have read it themselves in the book of the law, but did not, or did not heed it, therefore the prophets told them what the law was. See what need there is of the preaching of the word; people must hear the word preached, because they will not make the use they ought to make of the word unless they are used to hear the professors of it used in this reformation. The king, and the princes, and all the people, agreed to let go their servants, whatever loss or damage they might sustain by so doing. When the king and princes led in this good work, the people could not for shame but follow. The example and influence of great men would go very far to extirpate the most iniquitous corruptions. (3.) They bound themselves by a solemn oath and covenant, that they would do this, whereby they engaged themselves to God and one another. Note, What God has bound us to by his precepts, it is good for us to bind ourselves to by our promise. This covenant was very solemn: it was made in a sacred place, made before me, in the house which is called by my name, (v. 15.) in the special presence of God, the tokens of which, in the temple, ought to strike an awe upon them, and make them very sincere in their appeals to him, and promises made in his name. It was cut a calf in two, and passed between the pieces of the sacrifice, in allusion to this federal rite, Gen. xv. 17. Note, That we may effectually oblige ourselves to our duty, it is good to alarm ourselves with the apprehensions of the terror of the wrath and curse to which we expose ourselves, if we live in the contempt of it, that wrath which will cut sinners asunder; (Matth. xxi. 31.) and sudden signs may be of use to make impressions on the minds of the ungodly. (4.) They confirmed themselves herein to the command of God, and their covenant with him; they did let their servants go, though at this time, when the city was besieged, they could very ill spare them. Thus they did right in God's sight, v. 15. Though it was their trouble that drove them to it, yet he was well pleased with it; and if they had discovered this act of mercy to the poor, to their poor servants, it might have been a lengthening of their tranquillity, Dan. iv. 27.

II. When there was some hope that the siege was raised, and the danger over, they repented of their repentance, undid the good they had done, and forced the servants they had released, into their respective services again. 1. The king of Babyl. men was now gone off from them, v. 21. Pharaoh was bringing an army of Egyptians to oppose the progress of the king of Babylon's victories, upon the tiding of which the Chaldeans raised the siege for a time, as we find, ch. xxxviii. 5. They departed from Jerusalem. See how ready God was to put a stop to his judgments, upon the first instance of reformation, so slow is he to anger. He will be so swift to bless, as he is slow to anger. When they let their servants go free, God let them go free. When they began to think themselves safe from the besiegers, they made their servants come back into subjection to them, (v. 11.) and again, v. 16. This was a great abuse to their servants, to whom servitude would be more irksome, after they had had some taste of the pleasures of liberty. It was a great shame to themselves, that they should keep in a good work that was so short. But it was especially an affront to God; in doing this, they fol-lowed his name, v. 16. It was a contempt of the command he had given them, as if that were of no force at all, but they might either keep it, or break it, as they thought fit. It was a contempt of the covenant they had made with him, and of that wrath which they had incurred in it. But it was a jesting with God Almighty, as if he could be imposed upon by falacious promises, which, when they had gained their point, they would look upon themselves no longer obliged by. It was lying to God with their mouths, and flattering him with their tongues. It was likewise a contempt of the judgments of God, and setting them at defiance. As soon as they were of the course of them was stopped a little and interrupted, they would never proceed again, and the judgment would never be revived. Whereas re
pries are so far from being pardons, that if they be abused thus, and sinners take encouragement from them to return to sin, they are but preparatives for heavier strokes of divine vengeance.

III. For this treacherous dealing with God, they are here severely threatened; Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Those that think to put a cheat upon God by a dissembled repentance, a fallacious covenant, and a partial temporary deliverance, will prove in the end to have put the greatest cheat upon their own souls; for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. It is here threatened with an observable air of displeasure against them. 1. That since they had not given liberty to their servants to go where they pleased, God would give all his judgments liberty to take their course against them without control; (v. 17.) Ye have not proclaimed liberty to your servants. Though they had done it, (v. 16.) yet they might truly be said not to have done it, because they did not stand to it, but used it again; and Pacticum non dictur quod non perseverat—That is not said to be done, which does not last. The righteousness that is forsaken and turned away from, shall be forgotten, and not mentioned, any more than the beam; (v. 15.) The beam was but slight and despised; therefore I will proclaim a liberty for you; I will discharge you from my service, and put you out of my protection, which they foresaw that would withdraw from their allegiance. You shall have liberty to choose which of these judgments you will be cut off by, sword, famine, or pestilence; such a liberty as was offered to David, which put him into a great strait, and, being strong, could not expect the privileges of free-born subjects. 3. That, since they had broken the covenant which they ratified by a solemn imprecation, God would bring on them the evil which they imprecated upon themselves, in case they should break it. Out of their own mouth will he judge them, and so shall their doom be; the penalty of their bond shall be recovered of them. 4. Therefore I will proclaim a liberty for you; I will discharge you from my service, and put you out of my protection; for so some read v. 18. I will make the men which have transgressed my covenant, as the calf which they cut in reain; I will divide them in sunder as they divided it in sunder. 4. That, since they would not let go their servants out of their hands, God would deliver them into the hands of those that hated them. Even the princes and nobles, both of Judah and Jerusalem, of the city; the eunuchs, chamber-gains, or great officers of the court, the priests, and all the people, they had all dealt treacherously with God, and therefore shall all be involved in the common ruin, without exception; (v. 19.) they shall all be given into the hand of their enemies, that seek, not their wealth only, or their service, but their life. And they shall judge Judah and Jerusalem, of the country and that contain them; when they have their lives, they shall leave their dead bodies unburied, a loathsome spectacle to all mankind, and an easy prey to the fowls and beasts, a lasting mark of ignominy being here fastened on them. 5. That, since they had embodies themselves in returning to their sin, contrary to their covenant, by the retreat of the Chaldean army from them, God will perform, will bring it upon them again; "They are now gone up from you, and your fright is over for the present, but I will command them to face about as they were; they shall return to this city, and take it and burn it." Note, (1.) As confidence in God is a hopeful presage of approaching deliverance, so security in sin is a sadomen of approaching destruction. (2.) When judgments are removed from a people before they have done their work, leave them, but leave them unblamed and unformed, (it is cum animo revertendo—with a design to return,) they do but retreat to come on again with such much the better force. When, and if, judges, he will overcome. (3.) It is just with God to disappoint the expectations of mercy which his providence had given cause for, when we disappoint those expectations of duty which our proffessions, pretensions, and fair promises, had given cause for. If we repent of the good we had purposed, God will repent of the good he had purposed. With the forward thou wilt show thyself forward.

**CHAP. XXXV.**

A variety of methods is tried, and every stone turned, to awaken the Jews to a sense of their sin, and to bring them to repentance and reformation. The scope and tendency of many of the prophet's sermons was to frighten them out of their disobedience, by setting before them what would be the end thereof, if they persisted in it. The scope of this sermon, in this chapter, is to shame them out of their disobedience, if they had any sense of history left in them, for a discourse of the nature to be told upon. 1. He sets before them the obedience of the family of the Rechabites to the commands which were left them by Jonadab their ancestor, and how they persevered in it; and as the obedience of that family must be turned from, v. 1, 11. With this he aggravates the disobedience of the Jews to God, and their contempt of his precepts, v. 12, 15. 3. He foretells the judgments of God upon the Jews for their impious disobedience, v. 16, 17. 4. He assures the Rechabites of the blessing of God upon them for their pious obedience to their father, v. 18, 19.

1. **The word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, in the days of Je-hoiam the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, 2. Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the Lord, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink. 3. Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziniah, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites; 4. And I brought them into the house of the Lord, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah, the keeper of the door: 5. And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups; and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. 6. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons for ever: 7. Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any; but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. 8. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our
days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; 9. Nor to build houses for us to dwell in; neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: 10. But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. 11. But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem.

This chapter is of an earlier date than many of those before; for what is contained in it, was said and done in the days of Jehoiakim; (v. 1.) but then it must be in the latter part of his reign, for it was after the king of Babylon with his army came up into the land, (v. 11.) which seems to refer to the invasion mentioned 2 Kings xxxiv. 2. which was upon occasion of the rebellion of Judah against Nebuchadrezzar, from which time, till after the captivity, a majority of the people, continued to dwell in tents, and make them to be a constant institution, as it was ordained before in Num. xxxv. 2. These are the words of Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab. The Kenites, at least those of them that had a settled estate in the land of Israel, were of the posterity of Hobab, Moses's father-in-law, Judg. i. 16. We find them separated from the Amalekites, 1 Sam. xv. 6. See Judg. iv. 17. One family of these Kenites had their denomination from Rechab; his son, or a lineal descendant from him, was Jonadab, a man famous in his time for wisdom and piety. He flourished in the days of Jehoiakim, king of Israel, near 300 years before this; for there we find him counted by that rising prince, when he affected to appear zealous for God, (2 Kings x. 15., 16.) which he thought nothing more likely to confirm people in the opinion of, than to have so good a man as Jonadab ride in the chriot with him. Now we are told, that this was the order, and rule of living, which Jonadab, probably by his last will and testament, in writing, and duly executed, charged his children, and his posterity after him, throughout all generations, religiously to observe: and we have reason to think that they were such as he himself had all his days observed. 1. He forbade them to drink wine, according to the law of the Nazarites. Wine is indeed given to make glad the heart of man, and we are allowed the sober and moderate use of it, but we are so apt to abuse it, and get hurt by it, and a good man, who has his heart made continually glad with the light of God's countenance, has so little need of it for that purpose, (Ps. iv. 6., 7.) that it is a commendable piece of self-denial, either not to use it at all, or very sparingly and medicinally, as Timothy used it, 1 Tim. v. 23. 2. He appointed them to dwell in tents, and not to take houses; 3 Kings iv. 20. 3. He enjoined them to be merciful dwellers, that they might dwell in tents all their days, not for a few days, as Israel at the feast of tabernacles, not only in summer days, as soldiers and shepherds, but all their days. They must from the beginning accustom themselves to endure hardness, and then it would be no difficulty to them, no, not under the decays of old age. Now why did Jonadab prescribe these rules of living to his posterity? It was not merely to show his superiority, nor his peculiar sanctity, by imposing upon them what he thought fit; but it was to show his wisdom, and the real concern he had for their welfare, by recommending to them what he knew would be beneficial to them; yet, not tying them by any oath or vow, or under any penalty, to observe these rules, but only advising them to conform to this discipline, as far as they found it for their good, and as far as their wisdom directed. This was an excellent advice, necessary, as here, v. 11. He prescribed these rules to them, (1.) That they might preserve the ancient character of their family, which, however looked upon by some with contempt, he thought its real reputation. His ancestors had addicted themselves to a pastoral life, (Exod. ii. 16.) and he would have his posterity kept to it, and not degenerated from it, as Israel had done, who might see in this simplicity, and good sense, a rule, which was a good reason why they should accustom themselves to hard fare and hard lodging: for strangers, such as they were, must not expect to live as the landed men, so plentifully and delicately. Note, It is our wisdom and duty to accommodate ourselves to our place and rank, and not aim to live above it. What has been the lot of our fathers, why may we not be content that it should be our lot, and live according to it? Mind not high things. (3.) That they might not be envied and disturbed by their neighbours among whom they lived. If they that were strangers should live great, raise estates, and fare sumptuously, the natives would grudge them their abundance, and have a jealous eye upon them, as the Philistines had upon Isaac, (Gen. xxxvi. 14.) and would seek occasions to quarrel with them and abuse them; on which account it was thought it would be their prudence to keep low, for that would be the way to continue long; to live meanly, that they might live many days in the land where they were strangers. Note, Humility and contentment in obscurity are often the best policy, and men's surest protection. (4.) That they might be armed against temptations to luxury and sensuality, the prevailing sin of the age and place they lived in. Jonadab saw a general corruption of manners; the drunkards of Ephraim abounded, and he was afraid lest his children should be debauched and ruined by them; and therefore he obliged them to live by themselves, retired in the country; and that, they might not run into any unlawful pleasures, to deny themselves the use even of lawful delights. They must be very sober, and very abstinent, and this would contribute to the health both of mind and body, and to their living many days and easy ones, and such as they might reflect upon with comfort in the land where they were strangers. Note, The consideration of this, that we are strangers and pilgrims, should oblige us to abstain from all fleshly lusts, to live above the things of sense, and look upon them with a great contempt; and in all things that might be prepared for times of trouble and calamity, Jonadab might, without a spirit of prophecy, foresee the destruction of a people so wretchedly de
generated, and he would have his family provided, that, if they could not in the peace thereof, yet even in the midst of the troubles thereof, they might have peace. Let them therefore have little to lose, and then losing times would be the less dreadful to them: let them sit loose to what they had, and then they might with less pain be strip'd of it. Note, Those are the most practic'd enemies to the church, who are mortified to the world, and live a life of self denial. 

(6.) That in general, they might learn to live by rule, and under discipline. It is good for all, to do so, and to teach our children to do so. Those that have lived long, as Jonadab, probably, had done, when he left this charge to his posterity, can speak by experience of the vanity of the world, and the danger of their being among the children of men, and the additional pleasures, and therefore ought to be regarded, when they warn those that come after them to stand upon their guard.

II. We are here told how strictly his posterity observed these rules, v. 8-10. They had in their respective generations all of them obeyed the voice of Jonadab their father, had done according to all that he commanded them. They drank no wine, though they dwelt in a country where there was plenty of it; their wives and children drank no wine, for they that are temperate themselves should take care that all under their charge should be so too. They built no houses, tilled no ground, but lived upon the products of their cattle. This they did, partly in obedience to their ancestor, and out of a very strong inclination for his command, and partly from the experience they had of the benefit of living such a mortified life. See the force of tradition, and the influence that antiquity, example, and great names have upon men, and how that which seems very difficult, will by long usage and custom become easy, and in a manner natural.

Now, (1.) As to one of the particulars he had given them in charge, we are here told how in a case of necessity they dispensed with the violation of it: (v. 11.) When the king of Babylon came into the land, with his army, though they had hitherto dwelt in tents, they now quitted their tents, and came and dwelt in Jerusalem, and in such houses as they could furnish themselves with there. Note, The rules of a strict discipline must not be made too severe; they are but the shadow of things to come, and the necessity of the case calls for it; which, therefore, in making vows of that nature, it is wisdom to provide expressly for, that the way may be made the more clear, and we may not afterward be forced to say, It was an error, Eccles. v. 6. Commands of that nature are to be understood with such limitations. These Rechabites had tempted God, and not trusted him, if they had not used proper means for their own safety in a time of common calamity, notwithstanding the law and custom of their family. (2.) As to the other particular, we are here told how, notwithstanding the greatest urgency, they religiously adhered to it. Jeremiah took them into the temple, (v. 12.) into a prophet's chamber there, rather than into the chamber of the princes, that joined to it, because he had a message from God, which would look more like itself, when it was delivered in the chambers of a man of God. There he not only asked the Rechabites, Whether they drink any wine, but he set pots full of wine before them, and cups to drink out of, made the temptation as strong as possible, and said, Drink ye wine, ye shall have it on free cost; ye have broken one of the rules of your order, in coming to live at Jerusalem; why may ye not break this too? and if you are not so temperate, as they there do? But they peremptorily refused, they all agreed in the refusal; No, we will drink no wine; for with us it is against the law. The prophet knew very well they would deny it, and when they did, urged it no further, for he saw they were steadfastly resolved. Note, Those temptations are of no force with men of confirmed sobriety, which yet daily overcome such as, notwithstanding their convictions, are of no resolution in the paths of virtue.

12. Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, 13. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Go and tell the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the Lord. 14. The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me. 15. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers; but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me. 16. Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me: 17. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered. 18. And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you; 19. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.

The trial of the Rechabites' constancy was intended but for a sign; now here we have the application of it. 1. The Rechabites' observance of their father's charge to them is made use of as an aggravation of the disobedience of the Jews to God. Let them see it, and be ashamed. The prophet asks them, in God's name, Will ye not at length receive instruction? v. 13. Will nothing affect you? Will nothing fasten upon you? Will nothing prevail to discover sin and duty to you? You see how obedient the Rechabites are to their father's commandment; (v. 14.) but you have not inclined your ear, saith the Lord. (v. 15.) though one might much more reasonably expect that the people of God should have obeyed him, than that the sons of Jonadab should have
obeyed him; and the aggravation is very high, for,
(1.) The Rechabites were obedient to one who was
but a man like themselves, who had but the wisdom
and power of a man, and was only the father of
their flesh; but they were obedient to an in-
finite and eternal God, who had an absolute au-
thority over them, as the Father of their spirits.
(2.) Jonadab was long since dead, and was igno-
rant of them, and could neither take cognizance
of their disobedience to his orders, nor give correction
for it: but God lives for ever, to see how his laws
are observed, and is in readiness to revenge all
disobedience. (3.) The Rechabites were never
put in mind of their obligations to their father; but
God often sent his prophets to his people, to put
them in mind of their duty to him, and yet they
would not do it. This is insisted on here as a great
aggravation of their disobedience; "I have myself
spoken to you, rising early, and speaking, by the
written word and the dictates and admonitions of
conscience; " (v. 14.) say, I have sent unto you all
my servants the prophets, men like yourselves,
whose terrors shall not make you afraid, rising up,
early and sending them, " (v. 15.) and yet all in vain.
(4.) Jonadab never did that for his seed, that God
had done for his people; he left them a charge, but
left them no estate to bear the charge; but God had
given his people a good land, and promised them,
that, if they would be obedient, they should still
dwell in it; so bound over them the sun, not an in-
terlude and interest to be obedient, and yet they would
not hear, they would not hearken. (5.) God did
cut tie up his people to so much hardship, and to
such instances of mortification, as Jonadab obliged
his seed to; and yet Jonadab's orders were obeyed,
and God's were not.

2. Judgments are threatened, as often before,
against Judah and Jerusalem, for their disobedience
and neglect of obedience. The Rechabites shall reap
judgment against them, and shall condemn them;
for they very punctually performed the command-
ment of their father, and continued and persevered
in their obedience to it; " (v. 16.) but this people,
this rebellious and gainsaying people, have not
hearkened unto me; and therefore, " (v. 17.) because
they have not obeyed the precepts of the word,
God therefore will bring upon them, by the Chaldean army,
all the evil pronounced against them, both in the law
and in the prophets, for I have spoken to them, I have
called to them; spoken in a still small voice to them
that were near, and called aloud to them that were
at a distance; tried all ways and means to convince
and reduce them: spoken by my word, called by
my providence, both for the same purpose, and yet
all to no purpose; they have not heard, nor an-
swered.

3. Mercy is here promised to the family of the
Rechabites, for their steady and unanimous ad-
herence to the laws of their house; though it was only
for the shining of Israel that their constancy was
tried; yet, being unshaken, it was found unto praise,
and honour, and glory. And God takes occasion
from it to tell them that he had favours in reserve
for them, (v. 18, 19.) and that they should have the
comfort of them. It is promised, (1.) That the
family should continue as long as any of the families
of Israel, among whom they were strangers and
sojourners. It shall never want a man to inherit
what they had, though they had no inheritance to
leave them. Note; Sometimes those that have the
smallest estates have the most nourishment, and gen-
pity, but he that sends souths, will be sure to send
men. (2.) That religion shall continue in the family;
"He shall not want a man to stand before me, to serve
me." Though they are neither priests nor Levites,
not appear to have had any post in the temple-ser-
vice, yet, in a constant course of regular devotion,
they stand before God, to minister to him. Note,
[1.] The greatest blessing that can be entailed upon
a family, is, to have the worship of God kept up in
it from generation to generation. [2.] Temper-
rance, self-denial, and mortification to the world,
do very much befriend the exercises of piety, and help
to transmit the observance of them to posterity.
The more dead we are to the delights of sense, the
better we are disposed for the service of God; but
nothing is more fatal to the entail of religion in a
family than pride and luxury.

CHAP. XXXVI.

Here is another expedition tried to work upon this heedless
and unawake people, but it is tried in vain. A roll of
a book is sent to Baruch, containing a declara-
tion of all the sermons that Jeremiah had preached
unto them, that they might be put in mind of what they had
heard, and might the better understand it, when they read
it all before them at one view. Now here we have,
1. The writing of this roll by Baruch, as Jeremiah dic-
tated it, v. 1. — 11. The reading of the roll by Baruch
to all the people publicly on a fast-day, (v. 5. . . . 10.) af-
terward by Baruch to the priests privately, (v. 11. . . . 12.)
and lastly by Jonad to the king, v. 20, 21. III. The burn-
ing of the roll by the king, with orders to prosecute Je-
emiah and Baruch, v. 22, 24. IV. The writing of another
roll, with long additions, particularly of Jehe-
kanims dooms for burning the former, v. 27 — 52.

1. A N D it came to pass, in the fourth
year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah
king of Judah, that this word came unto Je-
emiah from the Lord, saying, 2. Take
thee a roll of a book, and write therein all
the words that I have spoken unto thee
against Israel, and against Judah, and
against all the nations, from the day I spake
unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even un
to this day, 3. It may be that the house
of Judah will hear all the evil which I pur-
pose to do unto them; that they may return
every man from his evil way, that I may
forgive their iniquity and their sin. 4. Then
Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah;
and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Je-
emiah all the words of the Lord, which he
did spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book.
5. And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, say-
ing, I am shut up; I cannot go into the
house of the Lord: 6. Therefore go thou,
and read in the roll, which thou hast written
from my mouth, the words of the Lord, in
the ears of the people, in the Lords house
upon the fasting-day: and also thou shalt
read them in the ears of all Judah that come
out of their cities. 7. It may be they will
present their supplication before the Lord,
and will return every one from his evil way:
for great is the anger and the fury that the
Lord hath pronounced against this people.
8. And Baruch the son of Neriah did ac-
cording to all that Jeremiah the prophet
commanded him, reading in the book the
words of the Lord in the Lords house.

In the beginning of Ezekiel's prophecy we meet
with a roll written in vision, for the discovery of
the things therein contained to the prophet himself,
who was to receive and digest them, Ezek. ii. 10.
1. Here in the latter end of Jeremiah's prophecy, we meet with a roll, written in fact, for the discovery of the things contained therein to the people, who were to hear and give heed to them; for the written word and other good books are of great use both to ministers and people. We have here, 1. The command which God gave to Jeremiah to write a summary of his sermons, of all the reproofs and all the warnings he had given God's people concerning their sin and their unfaithfulness to the Lord: Thus spake the Lord, in the 13th year of Ba-uch, the 1st year of Jehoiakim, v. 2, 3. What had been spoken only, must now be written, that it might be reviewed, and that it might spread the further, and last the longer. What had been spoken at large, with frequent repetitions of the same things, perhaps in the same words, (which has its advantage one way,) must now be contracted, and put into less compass, that the several parts of it might be better compared together, which has its advantage another way. What they had heard once, must be recapitulated, and rehearsed to them again, that what was forgotten, might be called to mind again, and what made no impression upon them at the first hearing, might take hold of them when the word was again brought to them. What had been perhaps already written, and published in single sermons, must be collected into one volume, that none might be lost. Note, The writing of the scripture is by divine appointment. And observe the reason here given for the writing of this roll; (v. 3.) It may be, the house of Judah will hear. Not that the divine prescience was at any uncertainty concerning its future, (there was no such necessity,) but that God knew certainly that they would deal very treacherously, Isa. lxviii. 8. But the divine wisdom directed to this as a proper means for attaining the desired end; if it failed, they would be the more inexcusable. And though God foresaw that they would not hear, he did not tell the prophet so, but prescribed this method to him as a probable one, to be used, in the hopes that they would hear, that is, heed and regard what they heard, take notice of it, and mix faith with it: for otherwise our hearing of the word, though an angel from heaven were to read or preach it to us, would stand us in no stead. Now observe here, (1.) What, it is hoped, they will thus hear. All that evil which I purpose to do unto them. Note, The serious consideration of the very evil which God will bring upon them, will set us to use to bring us to God. (2.) What, it is hoped, will be produced thereby. They will hear, that they may return, v. 4. That is, and return from their evil ways, v. 3. When Jeremiah orders it, he says, It may be, they will hear, and return from their evil ways, v. 3. When Jeremiah orders it, he says, It may be, they will pray, (they will present their supplications before the Lord,) and will return from their evil ways. Note, Prayer to God for grace to turn us, is necessary in order to our turning; and those that are convinced by the word of God, the necessity of returning to him, will present their supplications to him for that grace. And the consideration of this, that great is the anger which God has pronounced against us for sin, should quicken both our prayers and our endeavours. Now according to these orders, Baruch did read out of the book the words of the Lord, whenever there was a holy convocation, v. 8.

2. The instructions which Jeremiah gave to Baruch his scribe, pursuant to the command he had received from God, and the writing of the roll accordingly, v. 4, 5. The obligations of Baruch and Jeremiah, which God here begins to impose upon them, are hereby signified. He seems, he had not the pen of a ready writer, he could not write fast, or fair, so as Baruch could, and therefore he made use of him as his amanuensis. St. Paul wrote but few of his epistles with his own hand, Gal. vi. 11. Rom. xvi. 22. God dispenses his gifts variously; some have a good faculty of speaking, others at writing, and neither can say to the other, We have no need of you, 1 Cor. xii. 21. The Spirit of God dictated to Jeremiah, and he to Baruch, who had been employed by Jeremiah as trustee for him in his purchase of the field, (ch. xxxii. 12.) and now was advanced to be his scribe. It is no more a miracle to think that God may credit the Apocryphal book that bears his name, he was afterward himself a prophet to the captives in Babylon. Those that begin low are likely to rise high, and it is good for those that are designed for prophets to have their education under prophets, and to be serviceable to them. Baruch wrote what Jeremiah dictated in a roll of a book, on pieces of parchem bit, or vellum, which were joined together, the top of one to the bottom of the other, so making one long scroll, which was rolled perhaps upon a staff.

3. The orders which Jeremiah gave to Baruch, to read what he had written to the people. Jeremiah, it seems, was shut up, and could not go to the house of the Lord himself; (v. 5.) though he wrote, wrote not to a certain number of persons, nor any occasion to send officers to seize him, (v. 26.) yet he was forbidden by the king to appear in the temple, was shut out thence, where he might be serving God, and doing good, which was as bad to him as if he had been shut up in a dungeon. Jehoiakim was ripeing anpace for ruin, when he thus silenced God's faithful messengers. But when Jeremiah could not go to the Lord, he sent another, and that was deputed by him, to read to the people what he would himself have said. Thus St. Paul wrote epistles to the churches which he could not visit in person. Nay, it was what he himself had often said to them. Note, The writing and repeating of the sermons that have been preached, may contribute very much toward the answering of the great ends of preaching. What we have heard and known, it is good for us to hear again, that we may know it better. To preach and write the same thing is safe and profitable, and many times very necessary, (Phil. iii. 1.) and we must be glad to hear a good word from God, though we have it, as here, at second-hand. Both ministers and people must do what they can, when they cannot do what they would. Others may have the reading of the roll, the said, It may be, they will hear, and return from their evil ways, v. 3. When Jeremiah orders it, he says, It may be, they will pray, (they will present their supplications before the Lord,) and will return from their evil ways. Note, Prayer to God for grace to turn us, is necessary in order to our turning; and those that are convinced by the word of God, the necessity of returning to him, will present their supplications to him for that grace. And the consideration of this, that great is the anger which God has pronounced against us for sin, should quicken both our prayers and our endeavours. Now according to these orders, Baruch did read out of the book the words of the Lord, whenever there was a holy convocation, v. 8.

9. And it came to pass, in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, in the ninth month, that they proclaimed a fast before the Lord to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah into Jerusalem. 10. Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the Lord, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of...
Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house, in the ears of all the people. 11. When Michaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard out of the book all the words of the Lord, 12. Then he went down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber, and, lo, all the princes sat there, even Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes. 13. Then Michaiah declared unto them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people. 14. Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, unto Baruch, saying, Take in thy hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people, and come. So Baruch the son of Neriah took the roll in his hand, and came unto them. 15. And they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch read it in their ears. 16. Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words. 17. And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at thy mouth? 18. Then Baruch answered them, He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book. 19. Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go hide thee, thou and Jeremiah, and let no man know where ye be.

It should seem that Baruch had been frequently reading out of the book, to all companies that would give him the hearing, before the most solemn reading of it altogether, which is here spoken of; for the directions were given about it in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, whereas this was done in the 5th year, v. 9. But some think that the writing of the book fair over, took up so much time, that it was another year ere it was perfected; and yet perhaps it might not be past a month or two, he might begin in the latter end of the 4th year, and finish it in the beginning of the 5th, for the 9th verse, which refers to the commencement of the year in general, not to the year of that reign. Now observe here,

1. The government appointed a public fast to be religiously observed, (v. 9.) on account either of the distress they were brought into by the army of the Chaldeans, or of the want of rain; (ch. xiv. 1.) They proclaimed a fast to the people; whether the king and princes and the chief priests, ordered this fast, is not certain; but it was plain that God by his providence called them to it. Note, Great shows of piety and devotion may be found even among those, who, though they keep up these forms of godliness, are strangers and enemies to the power of it. But what will such hypocritical services avail? Fastings, without reforming, and turning away from sin, will never turn away the judgments of God, Jonah iii. 10. Notwithstanding this fast, God proceeded in his controversy with the people.

2. Baruch repeated Jeremiah's sermons publicly in the house of the Lord, on the fast-day. He stood in a chamber that belonged to Gemariah, and out of a window, or balcony, read to the people that were in the court, v. 10. Note, When we are speaking to God, we must be willing to hear from him; and therefore on days of fasting and prayer, it is requisite that the word be read and preached. All hearken unto, that God may hearken unto you, Judg. ix. 7. For our help in suing out mercy and grace, it is proper that we should be told of sin and duty.

3. An account was brought of this to the princes that attended the court, and were now together in the secretary's office, here called the scribe's chamber, v. 12. It should seem, though the princes had called the people to meet in the house of God, to fast, and pray, and hear the word, they did not think fit to attend there themselves, which was a sign that it was not from a principle of true devotion, but merely for fashion-sake, that they proclaimed this fast. We are willing to hope that it was not with a bad design, to bring Jeremiah into trouble for his preaching, but with a good design, to bring the princes into trouble for their sins, that Michaiah finds the princes sitting in the scribe's chamber, and tells them, they had better have been where he had been, hearing a good sermon in the temple, which he gives them the heads of. Note, When we have heard some good word that has affected and civilized us, we should be ready to communicate it to others, that did not hear it, for their edification. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

4. Baruch is sent for, and is ordered to sit down among them, and read it all over again to them, (v. 14, 15.) which he readily did, not complaining that he was weary with his public work, and therefore desiring to be excused, nor upbraiding the princes with their being absent from the temple, where they might have heard it when he read it there. Note, God's ministers must become all things to all men, if by any means they may gain some, must comply with them in circumstances, that they may secure the substance. St. Paul preached privately to them of reputation, Gal. ii. 2. 5. The princes were for the present much affected with the word that was read to them, v. 16. Observe, They heard all the words, they did not interrupt him, but very patiently attended to the reading of the whole book; for otherwise how could they make a competent judgment of it? And when they had heard all they were afraid, were all afraid, one as well as another; like Felix, who trembled at Paul's reasonings. The reproves were just, the remonstrances mild, and the prediction now in a fair way to be fulfilled; so that, laying all together, they were in a great consternation. We are not told what impressions this reading of the roll made upon the people, (v. 10.) but the princes were put into a fright by it, and (as some read it) looked one upon another, not knowing what to say. They were all convinced that it was worthy to be regarded, but not sure what to think on it till they agreed to tell the king of all these words; and if he think fit to give credit to them, they will, otherwise not, no, though it were to prevent the ruin of the nation. And yet at the same time they knew the King's mind so far, that they advised Baruch and Jeremiah to hide themselves, (v. 19.) and to shift as they could for their own safety, expecting no other than that the king, instead of being
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convinced, would be exasperated. Note, It is common for sinners, under convictions, to endeavour to shake them off, by shifting off the prosecution of them to other persons, as these princes here, or to another more convenient season, as Felix.

6. They asked Baruch a trilling question, How he wrote all those words? v. 17. But they suspected there was something extraordinary in it; but Baruch gives them a plain answer, that there was nothing but what was common in the manner of the writing—Jeremiah dictated, and he wrote, v. 18. But thus it is common for those who would avoid the convictions of the word of God, to start needless questions about the way and manner of the inspiration of it.

20. And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king. 21. So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber; and Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. 22. Now the king sat in the winter-house, in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. 23. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the pen-knife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. 24. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words. 25. Nevertheless, Elnathan, and Delaiah, and Gemariah, had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll; but he would not hear them. 26. But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of HammLech, and Saraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe, and Jeremiah the prophet: but the Lord hid them. 27. Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, (after that the king had burnt the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah,) saying, 28. Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jeboiam the king of Judah hath burnt. 29. And thou shalt say to Jeboiam king of Judah, Thus saith the Lord, Thou hast burnt this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? 30. Therefore thus saith the Lord of Jeboiam king of Judah, He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. 31. And I will punish him, and his seed, and his servants, for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them: but they hearkened not. 32. Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein, from the mouth of Jeremiah, all the words of the book which Jeboiam king of Judah had burnt in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words.

We have traced the roll to the people, and to the princes, and here we are to follow it to the king; and we find,

1. That, upon notice given him concerning it, he sent for it, and ordered it to be read to him, v. 20, 21. He did not desire that Baruch would come and read it himself, who could read it more intelligently, and with more authority and affection, than any one else; nor did he order one of his princes to do it; (though it had been no disparagement to the greatest of them) much less would he vouchsafe to read it himself; but Jehudi, one of his pages now in waiting, who was sent to fetch it, is bid to read it, who, perhaps, scarcely knew how to make sense of it. But those who thus despise the word of God, will do as much as to appear, as this king here did, that they hate it too, and have not only low but ill thoughts of it.

2. That he had not patience to hear it read through as the princes had, but that, when he had heard three or four leaves read, in a rage, he cut it with his penknife, and threw it piece by piece into the fire, that he might be sure to see it all consumed, v. 20, 23. This was a piece of as daring impiety as a man could lightly be guilty of, and an most impudent affront to the God of heaven, whose message this was. (1.) Thus he showed his iniquity of reproof; being resolved to persist in sin, he would by no means bear to be told of his faults. (2.) Thus he showed his indignation at Baruch and Jeremiah; he would have cut them in pieces, and burned them, and he had had them in his reach, when he was in this passion. (3.) Thus he showed his obstinate resolution, never to comply with the designs and intentions of the warnings given him; he will do what he will, whatever God by his prophets says to the contrary. (4.) Thus he foolishly hoped to defeat the threatenings denounced against him; as if God knew not how to execute the sentence when the roll was gone in which it was written. (5.) Thus he thought he had effectually provided that the things contained in this roll should spread no further, which was the care of the chief-priest concerning the gospel, Acts iv. 17. They had told him how this roll had been read to the people and to the princes: "But," (says he) "I will take a course that shall prevent its being read any more." See what sedition there is against God in the carnal mind, and wonder at the patience of God, that he bears with such indignities done to him!

3. That neither the king himself, nor any of his princes, were at all affected with the word; They were not afraid, (v. 24.) no, not those princes that trembled at the word, when they heard it the first time, v. 16. So soon, so easily, do good impressions wear off! They showed some concern till they saw how light the king made of it, and then they shook off all that concern. They rent not their garments, as Josiah did; this Jeboiam's own father did, when he had the book of the law read to him, though it was not so particular as the contents of this roll
were, nor so immediately adapted to the present posture of affairs.

4. That there were three of the princes who had so much sense and grace left as to interpose for the preventing of the burning of the roll, but in vain, v. 20. If they had from the first year apprehended that this scroll had been snatched from their hands, as they ought to have done, affected with the word, perhaps they might have brought the king to a better mind, and have persuaded him to bear it patiently; but frequently they that will not do the good they should, put it out of their own power to do the good they would.

5. That Jehoiakim, when he had thus in effect hindered them, his conscience was stirred, and he was arrested, as it were in a way of revenge, now that he thought he had got the better, signed a warrant for the apprehending of Jeremiah and Baruch, God's ministers; v. 26. But the Lord hid them. The princes bid them absent, (v. 19.) but it was neither the princes' care for them, nor theirs for themselves, that secured them, it was under the divine protection that they were safe. Note, God will not out a shelter for his people, though their persecutors be ever so industrious to get them into their power, till their hour be come; nay, and then he will himself be their Hiding-place.

6. That Jeremiah had orders and instructions to write in another roll the same words that were written in the roll which Jehoiakim had burnt, v. 27, 28. Note, Though the attempts of hell against the word of God should ever oppose all possible force, yet not one iota of that word shall fall to the ground, nor shall the unbelief of man make the word of God of no effect. Enemies may prevail to burn many a Bible, but they cannot abolish the word of God, can neither extinguite it, nor defeat the accomplishment of it. Though the tables of the law were broken, they were renewed again; and so out of the ashes of the roll that was burnt arose another Phœnix. The word of the Lord endures for ever.

7. That the king of Judah, though a king, was severely reckoned with by the King of kings for this indignity done to the written word. God noticed what it was in the roll that Jehoiakim took so much offence at. Jehoiakim was angry, because it was written therein, saying, Surely the king of Babylon shall come and destroy this land, v. 29. And indeed this was precisely what the divine power had foretold of him, and he should go far toward the destroying of this land. He did so, (2 Chron. xxxvi. 6, 7.) in his third year, Dan. i. 1. So that God and his prophets were therefore become his enemies, because they told him the truth, told him of the desolation that was coming, but at the same time putting him into a fair way to prevent it. But if this be the thing he takes so much amiss, let him know, (4.) That the wrath of God shall come upon him and his family, in the first place, by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar; he shall be cut off, and in a few weeks his son shall be dethroned, and exchanged his royal robes for prison-garments, so that he shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; the glory of that illustrious house shall be eclipsed, and die, in him; his dead body shall lie unburied, on which comes all to one; he shall be buried with the burial of an ass, that is, thrown into the next ditch; it shall lie exposed to all weathers, heat and frost, which will occasion its putrifying, and becoming loathsome, the sooner. "Not that his body" (says Mr. Gataker) "could be sensible of such usage, or himself, being deceased, of ought that should befall his body; but that the king's body in such a condition should be one of those hideous spectacles, and a horrid monument of God's heavy wrath and indignation against him, unto all that should behold it." Even his seed and his servants shall fare the worse for their relation to him, (v. 31.) for they shall be punished, not for his injustice, but so much the sooner for their own. (2.) That all the evil pronounced against Judah and Jerusalem in that roll, shall be brought upon them. Though the copy be burnt, the original remains in the divine counsel, which shall again be copied out after another manner in bloody characters. Note, There is no escaping of God's judgments by struggling with them; who ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered?

Lastly, That, when the roll was written anew, there were added to the former many like words, (v. 32.) many more threatenings of wrath and vengeance; for since they will yet walk contrary to God, we will heat the furnace seven times hotter. Note, as God is in one mind, and none can turn him, so he has still more arrows in his quiver; and those who contend with God's woes, do but prepare for themselves heavier of the same kind.

CHAP. XXXVII.

This chapter brings us very near the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, for the story of it lies in the latter end of Zedekiah's reign; we have in it, i. A general idea of the bad character of that reign, v. 1. ii. The message which Zedekiah, notwithstanding, sent to Jeremiah to desire his prayers, v. 3. iii. The flattering hopes which the people had received, that the Chaldeans would quit the siege of Jerusalem, v. 5. iv. The assurance God gave them by Jeremiah, (who was now at liberty, v. 4.) that the Chaldean army should renew the siege, and take the city, v. 6. v. The imprisonment of Jeremiah under pretence that he was a deserter, v. 11. vi. The kindness which Zedekiah showed him when he was a prisoner, v. 16. 21.

1. A king Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, was reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah.

2. But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the Lord, which he spake by the prophet Jeremiah. 3. And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the Lord our God for us. 4. Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people; for they had not put him into prison. 5. Then Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt: and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem. 6. Then came the word of the Lord unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 7. Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to inquire of me; Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land. 8. And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire. 9. Thus saith the Lord, Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart. 10. For though ye had sitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise
up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

Here is,
1. Jeremiah's preaching slighted, v. 1, 2. Zedekiah succeeded Coniah, or Jeconiah, and though he saw in his predecessor the fatal consequences of contemning the word of God, yet he did not take warning, nor give any more regard to it than others had done before him: Neither he, nor his courtiers, nor the people of the land, hearkened unto the words of the Lord, though they already began to be fulfilled. Note, Those have hearts waxethely hard indeed, that see God's judgments on others, and feel them on themselves, and yet will not be humbled, and brought to heed what he says. These had proof sufficient that it was the Lord who spake by Jeremiah the prophet, and yet they would not hearken to him.

2. Jeremiah's prayers desired. Zedekiah sent messengers to him, saying, Pray now unto the Lord our God for us. He did so before; (ch. xxi. 1, 2.) and one of the messengers, Zephaniah, is the same there and here. Zedekiah is to be commended for this, and it shows that he had some good in him, some sense of his need of God's favour, and of his own unworthiness to ask it for himself, and some value for good people, and good ministers, who had an interest in Heaven. Note, When we are in distress, we ought to desire the prayers of our ministers and Christian friends, for thereby we put an honour upon prayer, and an esteem upon our brethren. Kings themselves should look upon their praying people as the strength of the nation, (Jer. xv. 5, 10.) And yet this does but help to condemn Zedekiah out of his own mouth. If indeed he looked upon Jeremiah as a prophet, whose prayers might avail much both for him and his people, why did he not then believe him, and hearken to the words of the Lord, which he spake by him? He desired his good prayers, but would not take his good counsel, nor be ruled by him, though he spake in God's name, and it appears by this that Zedekiah knew he did. Note, It is common for those to desire to be prayed for, who yet will not be advised; but herein they put a cheat upon themselves; for how can we expect that God should hear others speaking to him for us, if we will not hear them speaking to us from him, and for him? Many who despise prayer they have withdrawn them from it, now that they are in adversity; Nay give us of your oil. When Zedekiah sent to the prophet to pray for him, he had better have sent for the prophet to pray with him; but he thought that below him: and how can they expect the comforts of religion, who will not stoop to the services of it.

3. Jerusalem flattered by the retreat of the Chaldeans. Zedekiah was now at liberty, (v. 4.) he went in and out among the people, might freely speak to them, and he spoken to by them. Jerusalem also, for the present, was at liberty, v. 5. Zedekiah, though a tributary to the king of Babylon, had entered into a private league with Pharaoh king of Egypt, (Ezek. xvii. 15.) pursuant to which, when the king of Babylon came to chastise him for his defection, though he came no more in person, after that great defeat which Nebuchadnezzar gave him in the reign of Jehoiakim, (2 Kings xxiv. 7.) yet sent some forces to relieve Jerusalem when it was besieged; upon notice of the approach of which, the Chaldeans raised the siege, probably not for fear of them, but in policy, to fight them at a distance, before any of the Jewish forces could join them. From this they encouraged the people to hope that Jerusalem was delivered for good and all out of the hands of its enemies, and that the storm was quite blown over. Note, Sinners are commonly hardened in their security by the insinuations of judgments, and the slow proceedings of them; and those who will not be awakened by the word of God, may justly be lulled asleep by the providence of God.

4. Jerusalem threatened with the return of the Chaldean army, and with ruin by it. Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah to desire him to pray for them, that the Chaldean army might not return; but Jeremiah was sensible that the judgment was gone forth, and that it was but a folly for them to expect peace, for God had begun a controversy with them, which he would make an end of; Thus saith the Lord, deceive not yourselves, v. 9. Note, Satan himself, though he is the great deceiver, could not deceive us, if we did not deceive ourselves; and thus sinners are their own destroyers by being their own deceivers; of which this is an illustration, that they are so frequently warned of it, and cautioned not to deceive themselves; and they have the word of God, the great design of which is to undeceive them. Jeremiah uses no dark metaphors, but tells them plainly,

1. (1) That the Egyptians shall retreat, and either give back, or be forced back, into their own land, (Ezek. xxv. 5.) which was said of old, (Isa. xxxv. 7.) and is here said again, v. 7. That the Egyptians shall help in vain; they shall not dare to face the Chaldean army, but shall retire with precipitation. Note, If God help us not, no creature can. As no power can prevail against God, so none can avail without God, nor countervail his departures from us.

2. (2) That the Chaldeans shall return, and shall renew their devastations, and prosecute it with more vigour than ever. They shall not depart for good and all, v. 9. They shall come again; (v. 8.) they shall fight against the city. Note, God has the sovereign command of all the hosts of men, even of those that know him not, that own him not, and they are all made to serve his purposes. He directs their marches, their counter-marches, their retreats, their returns, as it pleases him; and furious armies, like stormy winds, in all their motions are fulfilling his word.

3. (3) That Jerusalem shall certainly be delivered into the hand of the Chaldeans. They shall take it, and burn it with fire, v. 8. The sentence passed upon it shall he executed, and they shall be the executioners. O but (say they) the Chaldeans are afraid to withdraw from it; they are impracticable; ""And though they have,"" says the prophet, ""may, though you had snitten their army, so that many were slain, and all the rest wounded, yet those wounded men should rise up, and burn this city,"" v. 10. This is designed to denote that the doom passed upon Jerusalem is irrevocable, and its destruction inevitable; it must be laid in ruins, and the power of them that are enemies shall be, and is now in vain to think of evading the stroke, or contending with it. Note, Whatever instruments God has determined to make use of in any service for him, whether of mercy or judgment, they shall accomplish that for which they are designed, whatever incapacity or disability they may lie under, or be reduced to. Those by whom God has resolved to work, and who have quitted the business, are to be, and shall be, his destroyers they shall be, yea, though they were all wounded; for as when God has work to do, he will not want instruments to do it with, though they may seem far to seek; so when he has chosen his instruments, they shall do the work, though they may seem very unlikely to accomplish it.

11. And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army,
Then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people. 13. And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallst lowest among the Chaldeans. 14. Then said Jeremiah, It is false; I fall not away to the Chaldeans. But he hearkened not to him; so Irijah took Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes. 15. Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe; for they had made that the prison. 16. When Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins, and Jeremiah had remained there many days; 17. Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took him out; and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from the Lord? And Jeremiah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. 18. Moreover, Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, What have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison? 19. Where are now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land? 20. Therefore hear now, I pray thee, O my lord the king; let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee; that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there. 21. Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah into the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread out of the bakers’ street, until all the bread in the city were spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

We have here a further account concerning Jeremiah, who relates more passages concerning himself than any of the prophets; for the histories of the lives and sufferings of God’s ministers have been very serviceable to the church, as well as their preaching and writing.

1. We are here told that Jeremiah, when he had an opportunity for it, attempted to retire out of Jerusalem into the country; (v. 11, 12.) When the Chaldeans had broken up from Jerusalem, because of Pharaoh’s artifices, and the multitude of men that advanced towards them, Jeremiah determined to go into the country, and (as the margin reads it) to slip away from Jerusalem in the midst of the people, who, in that interval of the siege, went out into the country to look after their affairs there; he endeavoured to steal away in the crowd, for, though he was a man of great eminence, he could well reconcile himself to obscurity; though he was one of a thousand, he was content to be lost in the multitude, and buried alive in a corner, in a cottage. Whether he designed for Anathoth or no, does not appear; his concerns might call him thither, but his neighbours there were such as, unless they were minded, (ch. xi. 21.) might discourage him from coming among them; or he might intend to hide himself somewhere where he was not known, and fulfil his own wish, (ch. xi. 2.) Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place! Jeremiah found he could not go into Jerusalem, he laboured in vain among them, and therefore desired that he might have leave to leave them. Note, There are times when it is the wisdom of good men to retire into privacy, to enter into the chamber, and shut the doors about them. Isai. xxvi. 20.

II. That in this attempt he was seized as a deserter, and committed to prison; (v. 13.—15.) He was in the gate of Benjamin, so far he had gained a point, when a captain of the ward, who, probably, had the charge of that gate, interposed, and took him into custody. He was the grandson of Hananiah, who, the Jews say, was Hananiah the false prophet, who contested with Jeremiah, (ch. xxxvii. 16.) and that this young captain had a spite to Jeremiah upon that account. He could not arrest him without some pretence, and that which he charged upon him is, Thouallest away to the Chaldeans: an odious charge, for the Chaldeans are now gone off, Jeremiah could not reach them: or he could, who would go over to a baffled army? Jeremiah, therefore, with good reason, and with both the confidence and the mildness of an innocent man, denies the charge. “It is false, I fall not away to the Chaldeans, I am going upon my own lawful occasions.” Note, It is no new thing for the church’s best friends to be represented as in the interest of her worst enemies; thus have the blackest characters been put upon the fairest, purest minds, and, in such a malicious world as this is, innocence, nay, excellency itself, is no fence against the basest calumny. When at any time we are thus falsely accused, we may do as Jeremiah did, boldly deny the charge, and then commit our cause to him that judges righteously. Jeremiah’s protestation of his integrity, though he be a prophet, a man of God, a man of honour and sincerity, though he is a priest, and is ready to say it in verbo sacerdotis—on the word of a priest, is not regarded; but he is brought before the privy-council, who, without examining him and the proofs against him, but upon the base, malicious insinuation of the captain, fell into a passion with him, they were wrath; and what justice could be expected from a man of that temper, would hear no reason? They beat him, without any regard had to his coat and character, and then put him in prison, in the worst prison they had, that in the house of Jonathan the scribe; either it had been his house, and he had quitted it for the inconveniences of it, but it was thought good enough for a prison; or it was now his house, and perhaps he was a rigid severe man, and made it a house of cruel bondage to his prisoners. Into this prison Jeremiah was thrust, into the dungeon, which was dark and cold, damp and dirty, the most uncomfortable, unhealthful place in it; in the cells or cabins, there he must lodge, among which there is no choice, for they are all alike miserable lodging places; there Jeremiah remained many days, and, for aught appears, he was not made a prisoner of war. See what a world this is! The wicked princes, who are in rebellion against God, lie at ease, lie in state, in their palaces, while godly Jeremiah, who is in the service of God, lies in pain, in a loathsome dungeon. It is well that there is a world to come! III. That Zedekiah at length sent for him, and showed him great kindness, not till the Chaldean army was returned, and had laid fresh siege to the city; when their vain hopes, with which they fed themselves, (and in confidence of which
they had re-enslaved their servants, ch. xxxiv. 11.) were all vanished, then they were in a greater confusion and consternation than ever; “O then” (says Zedekiah) “send in all haste for the prophet; let me have some talk with him.” When the Chaldeans were withdrawn, he only sent to the prophet to pray for him; but now that they had again invested the city, he sent for him to consult him. Thus gracious men will be when pangs come upon them!

1. The king sent for him to give him private audience as an ambassador from God. He asked him secretly in his house, being ashamed to be seen in his company, “Is there any word from the Lord? ch. v. 1. Canst thou give any comfort? Canst thou give us any hopes that the Chaldeans shall again retire?” Note, Those that will not hearken to God’s admonitions when they are in prosperity, would be glad of his consolations when they are in adversity, and expect that his ministers should then speak words of peace to them; but how can they expect it? What have they to do with peace? Jeremiah’s life and comfort are in Zedekiah’s hand, and he has now a petition to present to him for his favour, and yet, having this opportunity, he tells him plainly, that there is a word from the Lord, but no word of comfort for him or his people; Thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. If Jeremiah had consulted with flesh and blood, he would have given him a plausible answer, and though he would not have been the more at ease the more he told him; otherwise he would tell him the worst at this time; what occasion was there for it, when he had so often told it him before? But Jeremiah was one that had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful, and would not, to obtain mercy of man, be unfaithful either to God or to his prince; he therefore tells him the truth, the whole truth. And, since there was no necessity, it would be a wantonness for him to keep from him his doom, that being no surprise to him, it might be the less a terror, and he might provide to make the best of bad. Jeremiah takes this occasion to upbraid him and his people with the credit they gave to the false prophets, who told them that the king of Babylon should not come at all, or when he was withdrawn, should not come again against them, v. 12. “Here are not your prophets, who told you that you should have peace?” Note, Those who receive themselves with groundless hopes of mercy, will justly be upbraided with it when the event has undeceived them.

2. He improved this opportunity for the present of a private petition, as a poor prisoner, v. 18, 20. Jeremiah’s powerful prayer, against the sentence God had passed upon Zedekiah, but it was in Zedekiah’s power to reverse the sentence which the princes had given against him; and therefore, since he thought him fit to be used as a prophet, he would not think him fit to be abused as the worst of malefactors. He humbly expostulates with the king; “What have I offended against thee, or thy ser- vants, or thy city? When did I speak against the wealth of thy house, that thou sayest I have put me in prison?” And many a one that has been very hardly dealt with, has been able to make the same appeal, and to make it good. He likewise earnestly begs, and very pathetically, (v. 20.) Cause me not to return to yonder noisome gaol, to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there. This was the language of innocent nature, some of the highest indignation, of the most bitter grievances, and solicitous for its own preservation. Though he was not at all unwilling to die God’s martyr, yet, having so fair an opportunity to get relief, he would not let it slip, lest he should die his own murderer. When Jeremiah delivered God’s message, he spake, as one having authority, with the greatest boldness; but when he presented his own request, he spake as one under authority, with the greatest submissiveness; Hear me, I pray thee, O my lord the king, let my supplications, I pray thee, be accepted before thee. Here is not a word of complaint of the princes that unjustly committed him, no offer to bring an action of false imprisonment against them, but all in a way of modest supplication to the king, to teach us that even when we act with the courage that becomes the faithful servants of God, yet we must conduct ourselves with the meekness and modesty that become dutiful subjects to the government God hath set over us. A lion in God’s cause, must be a lamb in his own. And we find that God gave Jeremiah favour in the eyes of the king, when he did not deal as he deserved; (1.) He gave him his request, took care that he should not have the sentence upon him: he ordered that he should have the liberty of the court of the prison, where he might have a pleasant walk, and breathe a free air. (2.) He gave him more than his request, took care that he should not die for want, as many did that had their liberty, by reason of the straitness of the siege; he ordered him his daily bread out of the public stock (for the prison was within the verge of the court) till all the trouble was spent. Zedekiah ought to have released him, nay, to have preferred him, to have made him a privy-counsellor, as Joseph was taken from prison to be the second man in the kingdom; but he had not courage to do that,—it was well he did as he did, and it is an instance of the care God takes of his people. It is not enough they suffer suffering; it is an instance of the care God takes of his people, that he make even their confinement turn to their advantage, and the court of their prison to become as green pastures to them, and raise up such friends to provide for them, that in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

In this chapter, just as in the former, we have Jeremiah greatly debased under the frowns of the princes, and yet greatly honoured by the favour of the king; they used him, as a criminal, he used him as a privy-counsellor. Here, 1. Jeremiah for his faithfulness is put into the dungeon by the princes, v. 1. 6. II. At the intercession of Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, by special order from the king, he is taken up out of the dungeon, and carried only to the court of the prison, v. 7. 13. III. He has a private conference with the king upon the present juncture of affairs, v. 14. 23. IV. Care is taken to keep that conference private, v. 24. 28.

1. THEN Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying, 2. Thus saith the Lord, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live. 3. Thus saith the Lord, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon’s army, which shall take it. 4. Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death; for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt. 5. Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand: for the
king is not he that can do any thing against you. 6. Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire. 7. Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs, which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon, (the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin,) 8. Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying, 9. My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is; for there is no more bread in the city. 10. Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die. 11. So Ebed-melech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon unto Jeremiah. 2. And Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine arm-holes, under the cords. And Jeremiah did so. 13. So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

Here, 1. Jeremiah persists in his plain preaching: what he had many a time said, he still says; (v. 3.) "This city shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon; though it hold out long, it will be taken at last; nor would he have so often repeated this un-welcome message, but that he could put them in a certain way, though not to save the city, yet to save themselves; so that every man might have his own life given him for a prey, if he would be advised. v. 2. Let him not stay in the city, in hopes to defend that, for it will be to no purpose, but let him go forth to the Chaldeans, and throw himself upon their mercy, before things come to extremity, and then he shall live; they will not put him to the sword, but give him quarter, Satias est prostrasse leoni.—It suffices the lion to lay his antagonist prostrate, and he shall escape the famine and pestilence, which will be the death of multitudes within the city. Note, Those do better for themselves, who patiently submit to the rebukes of Providence, than those who contend with them. And if we cannot have our liberty, we must reckon it a mercy to have our lives, and not foolishly throw them away upon a point of honour; they may be reserved for better times.

2. The princes persist in their malice against Jeremiah. He was faithful to his country, and his trust as a prophet, though he had suffered many a time for his faithfulness; and though at this time he ate the king's bread, yet that did not stop his mouth. But his persecutors were still bitter against him, and complained that he abused the liberty he had of walking in the court of the prison, for though he could not go to the temple to preach, yet he vented the same things in private conversation to those that came to visit him; and therefore (v. 4.) they represented him to the king as a dangerous man, disapproved to him, and one that lived under; He seeks not the welfare of this people, but the hurt: an unjust insinuation, for no man had laid out himself more for the good of Jerusalem than he had done. They represent his preaching as having a bad tendency; the design of it was plainly to bring men to repent, and turn to God, which would have been as much as any thing a strengthening to the faith of both the solitary end of the church, and yet they represented it as weakening their hands, and discouraging them; if he did this, it was their own fault. Note, It is common for wicked people to look upon God's faithful ministers as their enemies, only because they show them what enemies they are to themselves while they continue impenitent.

3. Jeremiah, bereft, by the king's permission, is put into a dungeon, with a view to his destruction there. Zedekiah, though he felt a conviction that Jeremiah was a prophet, sent of God, had not courage to own it, but yielded to the violence of his persecutors, v. 5. He is in your hand; and a worse sentence he could not have passed upon him. We found in Jehoiakim's reign, that the princes were better affected to the prophet than the king was, (2 K. xxi. 18.) now they were more violent against him, as sign that they were opening space for ruin. Had it been in a case that concerned his own honour or profit, he would have let them know that the king is he who can do what he pleases, whether they will or no; but in the cause of God and his prophet, which he was very cool in, he basely sneaks, and truckles to them, The king is not he that can do any thing against you. Note, This base submission will be a great deal to answer for, though they have a secret kindness for good people, dare not own it in a time of need, nor will do what they might do, to prevent mischief designed them. The princes having this general warrant from the king, immediately put poor Jeremiah into the dungeon of Malchiah, that was in the court of the prison, (v. 6.) a deep dungeon, for they had him cast down into it, (v. 7.) and for there was no water in it, but mire; and he sunk in the mire, up to the neck, says Josephus. They that put him here, doubtless designed that he should die here, die for hunger, die for cold, and so die miserably, die obscurely, fearing, if they should put him to death openly, the people might be affected with what he would say, and be incensed against them. Many of God's faithful witnesses have thus been privately made away, and staved to death in prisons, whose blood will be brought to account in the day of discovery. We are not here told what Jeremiah did in this distress, but he tells us himself, (Lam. iii. 35, 37.) I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon, and thou didst hear, saying, Fear not.

Application is made to the king by an honest courtier, Ebed-melech, one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber, in behalf of the poor sufferer. Though the princes carried on the matter as privately as they could, yet it came to the ear of this good man, who, probably, sought opportunities to do good. It may be, he came to the knowledge of it by hearing Jeremiah's moans out of the dungeon, for it was in the king's house, v. 7. Ebed-melech was an Ethiopian, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, and yet had in him more humanity, and more divinity too, than native Israelites had. Christ found more faith among Gentiles than among Jews. Ebed-melech lived in a wicked court, and a very corrupt, degenerate age, and yet had a great sense both of
equity and piety. God has his remnant in all places, among all sorts. There were saints even in Cesar's household. The King was now sitting in the gates of Benjamin, to try causes, and receive appeals and petitions, or perhaps holding a council of war there: thither Ebed-melech went immediately to him, for the case would not admit delay; thus proved the king's benevolence, that he did not wait for any sort of replies, but sent his own messenger immediately. 17. The thing was discovered. God gave the king a great deal of wrong done him, and is not afraid to tell the king so, though they were princes that did it, though they were now present in court, and though they had the king's warrant for it. Whither was this? Whither was the king's ápplied innocence for protection, or the throne, especially when great men are his oppressors? Ebed-melech appears truly brave in this matter; he does not mince the matter; though he had a place at court, which he would be in danger of losing for his plain dealing, yet he tells the king faithfully, let him take it as he will: These men have done ill in all that they have done to Jeremiah. They dealt unjustly with him, for he had not deserved any punishment at all; and they had dealt barbarously with him, so as they used not to deal with the vilest malefactors. And they needed not to have put him to this miserable death, for if they had let him alone where he was, he was likely to die for hunger in the place where he was, in the court of the prison to which he was confined, more doubtless than he could not. And he took the stores out of which he was to have his allowance, (ch. xxxvii. 21.) were in a manner spent. See how God can raise up friends for his people in distress, where they little thought of them; and spirit men for his service even beyond expectation! 5. Orders are immediately given for his release. Ebed-melech takes care to see them executed. The king who, but now, durst do nothing against the princes, had his heart wonderfully changed on a sudden, and will now have Jeremiah released, in defiance of the princes, for therefore he orders no less than 50 men, and those of the life-guard, to be employed in fetching him out of the dungeon, lest the princes should raise a party to oppose it, v. 10. Let this encourage us to appear boldly for God—we may succeed beyond our thought, than we could have. for the hearts of kings are in the hand of God. Ebed-melech gained his point, and soon brought Jeremiah the good news; and it is observable how particularly the manner of his drawing him out of the dungeon is related: (For God is not unrighteous to forget any work or labour of love which is showed to his people or ministers, no, nor any circumstance of it, Heb. vi. 10.) special notice is taken of his great tenderness in providing old soft rags for Jeremiah to put under his arm-holes, to keep the cords from hurting him, wherewith he was to be drawn up, his arm-holes being, probably, galled by the cords wherewith he was let down. Nor did he throw the rags down to him, lest they should be lost in the mire, but carefully let them down, v. 11, 12. Note, Those that are in distress do not only feel relieved, but relieved with compassion and marks of respect; all which shall be placed to account, and abound to a good account in the day of recompense. See what a good use even old rotten rags may be put to, which therefore should not be made waste of, any more than broken meat: even in the king's house, and under the treasury too, these were carefully preserved for the use of the poor or sick. Jeremiah is brought up out of the dungeon, and is now where he was, in the court of the prison, v. 13. Perhaps Ebed-melech could have made interest with the king to have got him his discharge from thence also, now that he had the king's ear, but he thought him safer, and better provided for there, than he would be any where else. God can, when he pleases, make a prison to become a refuge and hiding-place to his people in distress and danger.

14. Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took Jeremiah the prophet unto him into the third court that is in the house of the Lord: and the king said unto Jeremiah, I will ask thee a thing; hide nothing from me. 15. Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken unto me? 16. So the king sware secretly unto Jeremiah, saying, As the Lord liveth, that made us this soul, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into the hand of these men that seek thy life. 17. Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: if thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burnt with fire; and thou shalt live, and thy house:

18. But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand. 19. And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me. 20. But Jeremiah said, They shall not deliver thee. Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord, which I speak unto thee: so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live. 21. But if thou refuse to go forth, this is the word that the Lord hath showed me: 22. And, behold, all the women that are left in the king of Judah's house shall be brought forth to the king of Babylon's princes: and those women shall say, Thy friends have set thee on, and have prevailed against thee: thy feet are sunk in the mire, and they are turned away back. 23. So they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans; and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burnt with fire. 24. Then said Zedekiah unto Jeremiah, Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die. 25. But if the princes hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king, hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; also what the king said unto thee; 26. Then thou shalt say unto them, I pre-
sent my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there. 27. Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him: and he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded. So they left off speaking with him: for the matter was not perceived. 28. So Jeremiah abode in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken: and he was there when Jerusalem was taken.

In the foregoing chapter, we had the king in close conference with Jeremiah, and hence again, though (2 Chr. xxxvii. 6.) he had given him up into the hands of his enemies; such a struggle there was, in the breast of this unhappy prince, between his convictions and his corruptions. Observe,

1. The honour that Zedekiah did to the prophet. When he was newly fetched out of the dungeon, he sent for him to advise with him privately. He met him in the third entry, or, as the margin reads it, the third court: that is, he entered the court of justice, and adjourned, the house of the Lord, v. 14. In appointing this place of interview with the prophet, perhaps he intended to show a respect and reverence for the house of God, which was proper enough now that he was desiring to hear the word of God. Zedekiah would ask Jeremiah a thing; it should rather be rendered, a word; "I am here asking this for a word of prediction, of counsel, of comfort, a word from the Lord," ch. xxxvii. 17. Whatever word thou hast for me, hide it not from me, let me know the worst." He had been told plainly what things would come to, in the foregoing chapter, but, like Balaam, he asks again, in hopes to get a more pleasing answer, as if God, who is in one mind, were altogether such a one as himself, who was in many minds.

2. The bargain that Jeremiah made with him, before he would give him his advice, v. 15. He would indent, (1.) For his own safety; Zedekiah would have him deal faithfully with him; "And if I do," says Jeremiah, "wilt thou not put me to death? I am afraid thou wilt;" (so some take it;) "what else can I expect when thou art led blindfold by the princes?" "Wilt thou promise that thou wilt not." Not that Jeremiah was backward to seal the doctrine he preached, with his blood, when he was called to it; but, in doing our duty, we ought, as all lawful means for our own preservation; even the apostles of Christ did so. (2.) He would indent for the success of his advice, being no less condescended for Zedekiah's welfare than for his own. He is willing to give him whole-souled advice, and does not abhorbid him with his unkindness in suffering him to be put into the dungeon, nor bid him go and consult with his princes, whose judgments he had such a value for. Ministers must with meekness instruct even those that oppose themselves, and render good for evil. He is desirous that he should hear counsel, and receive instruction. "Wilt thou not hear what I say? wilt thou not hear me? I am in hopes to find thee pious at last, and now in this thy day willing to know the things that belong to thy peace." Note, Then, and then only, there is hope of sinners, when they are willing to hearken to good counsel. Some read it as spoken despairingly; "If I give thee counsel, thou wilt not hearken unto me; I have reason to fear thou wilt not, and this is enough." But (v. 15.) Note, Ministers have little heart to speak to those who have long and often turned a deaf ear to them. Now, as to this latter concern of Jeremiah's, Zedekiah makes him no answer, will not promise to hearken to his advice: though he desires to know what is the mind of God, yet he will reserve himself at liberty, when he does know it, to do as he thinks fit; as if it were the prerogative of a prince not to have his ruin prevented by good counsel. But, as to the prophet's safety, he promises him, upon the word of a king, and confirms his promise to an oracle, that a man may alternately, when no advantage should be taken against him for it; I will neither put thee to death, nor deliver thee into the hands of those that will, v. 16. This, he thought, was a mighty favour, and yet Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, when Daniel read their doom, not only protected him, but preferred and rewarded him, Dan. iii. 29, 48. Zedekiah's oath on this occasion but leaves a blank, and yet it is observable: "As the Lord liveth, who made us this soul, who gave me this breath and thee thine, I dare not take away thy life unjustly, knowing that then I should forfeit my own to him that is the Lord of life." Not, God is the Father of spirits; souls are his workmanship, and they are more fearfully and wonderfully made than bodies are. The soul both of the greatest prince and of the poorest prince is of God's making; He fashioned their hearts alike in skin. In all our dealings both with ourselves and others, we ought to consider this, that the living God made us these souls.

3. The good advice that Jeremiah gave him, with good reasons why he should take it, not from any prudence or politics of his own, but in the name of God, the Lord of hosts and God of Israel; not as a statesman, but as a prophet, he advisors by all means to surrender himself and the city to the king of Babylon's princes; "Go forth to them, and make the best terms thou canst with them," v. 17. This was the advice he had given to the people, (v. 2.) and before, (ch. xxii. 9.) to submit to divine judgments, and not think of contending with them. Note, In dealing with God, that which is good counsel to the meanest, is so to the greatest, for there is no respect of persons with him. To persuade him to take this counsel, he sets before him good and evil, life and death. (1.) If he will tamely yield, he shall save his children from the sword, and Jerusalem from the flames. The white flag is yet hung out; if he will but acknowledge God's justice, he shall experience his mercy; The city shall not be delivered into the hand of the live, and the house. But, (2.) If he will obstinately stand it out, it will be the ruin both of his house and Jerusalem; (v. 18.) for when God judges he will overcome. This is the case of sinners with God; let them humbly submit to his grace and government, and they shall live; let them take hold on his strength, that they may make peace, and they shall make peace; but if they harden their hearts against his proposals, it will certainly be to their destruction; they must either bend or break.

4. The objection which Zedekiah made against the prophet's advice, v. 19. Jeremiah spake to him by prophecy, in the name of God, and therefore if he had had a due regard to the divine authority, wisdom, and goodness, as soon as he understood what God had shewn him, he ought speedily have acquiesced in it, and resolved to observe it without disputing; but, as if it had been the dictate only of Jeremiah's prudence, he advances it some prudential considerations of his own; but human wisdom is folly when it contradicts the divine counsels. All he suggests, is, "I am afraid, not of the Chaldeans, their princes and men of war, but of the Chaldeans' god, and I am very great god to the Chaldeans; when they see me I follow them, who had so much opposed their going, they will laugh at me, and say, Art thou also become weak as water?"
N the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it. 2 And in the eleventh year of Zede-
kiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, the city was broken up. 3 And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, even Nergal-shaezer, Sarchar-shanezer, Sarsechim, Rab-saris, Nergal-sharzec, Rab-mag, with all the residue of the princes of the king of Babylon. 4 And it came to pass that when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, by

**JEREMIAH, XXXIX.**

> Isa. xiv. 10. Now, (1.) It was not at all likely that he should be thus exposed and ridiculed, that the Chaldeans should so far gratify the Jews, or trample upon them, as to drive them into their hands; nor that the Jews, who were themselves captives, should be in such a gay humour, as to make a jest of the misery of their prince. *Note, We often frighten ourselves from our duty by foolish, causeless, groundless fears, that are merely the creatures of our own fancy and imagination.* (2.) If he should be taunted at a little by the Jews, could he not defend himself from it? Whence then would he do it? *Note, Those have very weak and fretful spirits indeed, that cannot bear to be laughed at for that which is both their duty and their interest. (3.) Though it had been really the greatest personal mischief that he could have imagined it to be, yet he ought to have ventured it, in obedience to God, and for the preservation of his family and city. He thought it would be looked upon as a piece of cowardice to surrender, whereas it would be really an instance of true courage cheerfully to bear a lesser evil, the mocking of the Jews, for the avoiding of a greater, the ruin of his family and kingdom.*

3. The pressing importunity with which Jereme-
iah followed the advice he had given the king. He warned him that he would lose the will of God, and the thing he feared should come upon him; (v. 20.) *They shall not deliver thee up,* but treat thee as becomes thy character. He begs of him, after all the foolish games he had played, to manage wisely the last stake, and now at length to do well for himself: *Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord, because it is his voice, so it shall be well unto thee.* But he tells him what would be the consequence if he would not obey. (1.) He himself would fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, as implacable enemies, whom he might now make his friends, by throwing himself into their hands. If he must fall, he should contrive how to fall easily; *Thus shall not escape, as thou hopest to do,* v. 23. (2.) He would himself be chargeable with the destruction of Jerusalem, which he pretended a con-
cern for the preservation of; *Thus shall cause this city to be burned with fire, for by a little sub-
mission and self-denial thou mightest have prevent-
ed it.* Thus subjects often suffer for the pride and willfulness of their rulers, who should be their protectors, but prove their destroyers. (3.) Whereas he causelessly feared an unjust reproach for surrendering the city, as if he had fallen under a just reproach for standing it out, and that from wrong too, v. 22. The court-ladies who were left when Jehoiakim and Jeconiah were carried away, will now at length fall into the hands of the enemy, and they shall say, *The men of thy peace, whom thou didst consult with, and confide in, and who promised thee peace if thou wouldst be ruled by them; they have set thee apart, and cast thee to the ground, and hold out to the last extremity; and see what comes of it? They, by prevailing upon thee, have prevailed against thee, and thou findest those thy real enemies, that would be thought thine only friends. Now thy feet are sunk in the mire, thou art embarrassed, and hast no way to help thyself; thy feet cannot get forward, but are turned away back again. Though he be let be by the women, when all his wives and children shall be made a prey to the conquerors, v. 23. Note, What we seek to avoid by sin, will be justly brought upon us by the righteousness of God. And those that de-
cline the way of duty, for fear of reproach, will cer-
tainly meet with much greater reproach in the way of obedience.*

> The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him, Prov. x. 24.

6. The care which Zedekiah took to keep this conference private; (v. 24.) *Let no man know of

these words. He does not at all incline to take God's counsel, nor so much as promise to consider it; for so Jeremiah has been to the calls of God, and so wilful in the ways of sin, that though he had so good counsel given him, he seems to be given up to walk in his own counsels. He has nothing to object against Jeremiah's advice, and yet he will not follow it. Many hear God's words, but will not do them. (1.) Jeremiah is charged to let no man know of what had past between the king and him. Zedekiah was concerned for his private, not so much for Jeremiah's safety, (for he knew that if they could do him no hurt without his permission,) but for his own reputation. *Note, Many have really a better affec-
tion to good men and good things than they are will-
ing to own. God's prophets are manifest in their consciences, (2 Cor. v. 11.) but they care not for manifesting that to the world; they would rather do them a kindness than have it known that they do: such, it is to be feared, love the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

(2.) He is instructed what to say to the princes, if they should examine him about it. He must tell them that he was petitioning the king not to remind him back to the house of Jonathan the scribe, (v. 25, 26.) and he did! tell them so, (v. 27.) and, no doubt, in a manner that the king might have this an opportunity of engaging the king's favour: so that this was no lie or equivocation, but a part of the truth, which it was lawful for him to put them off with when he was under no obligation at all to tell them the whole truth. *Note, Though we must be harmless as doves, so as never to tell a willful lie, yet we must be wise as serpents, so as not needlessly to expose ourselves to danger by telling all we know.*

**CHAP. XXXIX.**

As the prophet Isaiah, after he had largely foretold the de-
\(\text{ler}^\text{erance}\) out of Babylon, and spoken of the kings of Assyria, gave a particular narrative of the story, that it might appear how exactly the event answered to the pre-
diction, so the prophet Jeremiah, after he had largely foretold the delivering of Jerusalem into the hands of the king of Babylon, gives a particular account of that sad event for the same reason. That melancholy story we have in this chapter, which serves to dispose the false, flattering prophets, and to confirm the word of God's messengers. We are here told, I. That Jeremiah, after eighteen months' siege, was taken by the Chaldean army, v. 1. 3. II. That king Zedekiah, attempting to make his escape, was made a miserable captive to the king of Babylon, v. 4. 7. III. That Jeremiah, having been burnt to the ground, and the people carried captive, except the poor, v. 8. 10. IV. That the Chaldeans were very kind to Jeremiah, and took particular care of him, v. 11. 14. V. That Ebed-melech too, for his kindness, had a protection from God himself in this day of desola-
tion, v. 15. 18.
the gate betwixt the two walls; and he went out the way of the plain. 5. But the Chaldeans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah, in the land of Hamath, where he gave judgment upon him. 6. Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of the land. 7. Moreover, he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon. 8. And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem. 9. Then Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, carried away captive into Babylon the remnant of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to him, with the rest of the people that remained. 10. But Nebuzar-adan, the captain of the guard, left of the poor of the people, which had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

We were told, in the close of the foregoing chapter, that Jeremiah abode patiently in the court of the prison, until the day that Jerusalem was taken. He gave the princes no further disturbance by his prophesying, nor they him by their persecutions, for he had no more to say than what he had said, and, the siege being carried on briskly, God found them other work to do. See here what it came to.

1. The city is at length taken by storm; for how could it hold out when God himself fought against it? Nebuchadnezzar's army sat down before it in the ninth year of Zedekiah, in the tenth month, (v. 1.) in the depth of winter. Nebuchadnezzar himself soon after retired to take his pleasure, and left his generals to carry on the siege: they intermitted it awhile, but soon renewed it with redoubled force and vigour. At length, in the eleventh year, in the fourth month, about midsummer, they entered the city, the soldiers being so weakened by famine, and all their provisions being now spent, that they were not able to make any resistance, v. 2. Jerusalem was so strong a place, that nobody would have believed the enemy could ever have entered its gates, Lam. iv. 12. But sin had provoked God to withdraw his protection, and then, like Samson when his hair is cut, it is weak and powerless. v. 2.

2. The princes of the king of Babylon take possession of the middle gate, v. 3. Some think that it was the same with that which is called the second gate, (Zeph. i. 10.) which is supposed to be in the middle wall that divided between one part of the city and the other; here they cautiously made a halt, and durst not go forward into so large a city, among men that perhaps would sell their lives as dear as they could, until they had given directions for the searching of all places, that they might not be surprised by any ambush. They sat in the middle gate, from thence to take a view of the city, and give orders. The princes are here named, rough and mean names they are, to intimate what a sad change sin had made; there where Eliakim and Hilkiah, who bare the name of the God of Israel, used to sit, now sit Nergal-sharezer, and Sargar-nehbo, &c. who bare the names of the heathen gods. Rab-saris and Rab-mag are supposed to be not the names of distinct persons, but rather a capital and a smaller title, of those whose names go before. Sararchim was Rab-saris, that is, captain of the guard, and Nergal-sharezer, to distinguish him from the other of the same name that is put first, is called Rab-mag, that is, camp-master, either master-muster, or quarter-master; these and the other great generals sat in the gate. And now the day arrived, what Jeremiah prophesied long since, (ch. i. 15.) that the families of the kingdoms of the north should set every one of them to the entering of the gates of Jerusalem; justly do the princes of the heathen set themselves there, where the gods of the heathen had been so often set up.

3. Zedekiah having, in disguise perhaps, seen the princes of the king of Babylon take possession of one of the gates of the city, thought it high time to shift for his own safety, and, loaded with guilt and fear, he went out of the city, under no other protection but that of the night, (v. 4.) which soon failed him, for he was discovered, pursued, and overtaken; though he made the best of his way, he could make nothing of it, could not get forward, but in the plains of Jericho fell into the hands of the pursuers; (v. 5.) and then he was conducted to Riblah, where the king of Babylon passed sentence of death upon him, as a rebel, not sentence of death, but, one may almost say, a worse thing. For, (1.) He slew his sons before his eyes, and they must all be little, some of them infants, for Zedekiah himself was now but thirty-two years of age. The deaths of these sweet babes must needs be so many deaths to himself, especially when he considered that his own obstinacy was the cause of all the miseries he was told of this thing; (ch. xxxviii. 23.) They shall bring forth thy wives and children to the Chaldeans. (2.) He slew all the nobles of Judah, (v. 6.) probably not those princes of Jerusalem who had advised him to this desperate course, (it would be a satisfaction to him to see them cut off,) but the great men of the country, who were innocent of the matter. (3.) He ordered Zedekiah to have his eyes put out, (v. 7.) so condemning him to darkness, for life, when he had shut his eyes against the clear light of God's word, and was of those princes who will not understand, but walk in darkness, Ps. lxxxvii. 5. (4.) He bound him with two brazen chains of fetters, (so the margin reads it,) to carry him away to Babylon, there to spend the rest of his days in misery. All this sad story we had before, 2 Kings xxv. 4, &c.

4. Some time after, the city was burnt, temple and palace and all, and the wall of it broken down, v. 8. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! this comes of killing the prophets, and stoning them that were sent to thee. O Zedekiah, Zedekiah! this thou mightest have prevented, if thou wouldst but have taken God's counsel, and yielded in time." The part of that which was left were all carried away captive to Babylon. v. 9. Now we must bid a final farewell to the land of their nativity, that pleasant land, and to all their possessions and enjoyments in it; must be driven some hundreds of miles, like beasts, before their conquerors, that were now their cruel masters; must lie at their mercy in a strange land, and be servants to them who would be sure to rule them with rigour. The land of Judah, or the land of Jerusalem, is of its original name a Chaldee word, and is often used for Jerusalem among the Chaldeans, as if the Chaldeans, when they were lords, tyrannized more than any other: we have reason to think that the poor Jews had reason to say so. Some few were left behind, but they were the poor of the people, that had nothing to lose, and therefore never made any resistance. And they not only had their liberty, and were left to carry at
Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying, 12. Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him, even as he shall say unto thee. 13. So Nebuzar-adan, the captain of the guard, sent, and Nebushashan, Rab-saris, and Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, and all the king of Babylon's princes, 14. Even they sent, and took Jeremiah out of the court of the prison, and committed him unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, that he should carry him home: so he dwelt among the people. 15. Now the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah, while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying, 16. Go and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good; and they shall be accomplished in that day before thee. 17. For I will deliver thee in that day, saith the Lord; and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid. 18. For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee; because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord.

Here we must sing of mercy, as in the former part of the chapter we sang of judgment, and must sing unto God of both. We may observe here,

I. A gracious providence concerning Jeremiah. When Jerusalem was laid in ruins, and all men's hearts failed them for fear, then might he lift up his head with comfort, knowing that his redemption drew nigh, as Christ's followers, when the second destruction of Jerusalem was hastening on, Luke xxi. 28. Nebuchadnezzar had given particular orders that care should be taken of him, and that he should be in all respects well used, v. 11, 12. Nebuzar-adan and the rest of the king of Babylon's princes observed these orders, and discharged him out of prison, and did every thing to make him easy, v. 13, 14.

Now let us look upon this,

1. As a very generous act of Nebuchadnezzar, who, though he was a haughty potentate, yet took cognizance of this poor prophet; doubtless he had received information concerning him from the de-

servers, that he had foretold the king of Babylon's successes against Judah and other countries, till he had pressed his prince and people to submit to him, and that he had suffered very hard things for so doing; and in consideration of all this, (though perhaps he might have heard also that he had foretold the destruction of Babylon at length,) he gave him extraordinary marks of his favour. Note, It is the charitable rewards of God which grace men with the services and sufferings of the greatest. It was honourably done of the king, to give this charge, even before the city was taken, and of the captains to observe it, even in the best of action, and it is recorded for imitation.

2. As a reproach to Zedekiah and the princes of Israel; they put him in a prison, and the king of Babylon and his princes put him out. God's people and ministers have often found fairer and kinder usage among strangers and infidels, than among those that call themselves of the holy city. St. Paul found more favour and justice with king Agrippa than with Amanias the high-priest.

3. As the performance of God's promise to Jeremiah, in recompense for his services, (ch. xv. 11.) I will cause that man to whom thou art a terror of evil. Jeremiah had been faithful to his trust as a prophet, and now God approves himself faithful to him, and the promise he had made him. Now he is comforted, according to the time wherein he had been afflicted, and sees thousands fall on each hand, and himself safe. The false prophets fell by those judgments which they said should never come, (ch. xix. 1.)xvi. 18. but they saw the misery that the Lord was about to do on his own people, much more terrible to them. The true prophet escaped those judgments which he said would come, and that made his escape the more comfortable to him. The same that were the instruments of punishing the persecutors, were the instruments of relieving the persecuted; and Jeremiah thought the less of the severity of his deliverance for its coming by the hand of the king of Babylon, but saw the mercy in the hand of God in it. A fuller account of this matter we shall meet with in the next chapter.

II. A gracious message to Ebed-melech, to assure him of a recompense for his kindness to Jeremiah. This message was sent him by Jeremiah himself, who, when he returned him thanks for his kind-ness to him, thus turned him over to God to be his instrument of delivering him, and relieved a prophet in the name of a prophet, and thus he had a prophet's reward. This message was delivered to him immediately after he had done that kindness to Jeremiah, but it is mentioned here after the taking of the city, to show that as God was kind to Jeremiah at that time, so he was to Ebed-melech for his sake; and it was a token of special favour to both, and they ought so to account of it, that they were not involved in any of the common calamities. Jeremiah is bid to tell him,

1. That God would certainly bring upon Jerusalem the ruin that had been long and often threatened; and, for his further satisfaction, in having been kind to Jeremiah, he should see him abundantly proved a true prophet, v. 16. 2. That God took notice of the fear he had of the judgments coming. Though he was bruised both in the service of God, yet he was afraid of the rest of God. The enemies were men of whom he was afraid. Note, God knows how to adapt and accommodate his comforts to the fears and griefs of his people, for he knows their souls in adversity. 3. That he shall be delivered from having a share in the common calamity; I will deliver thee, I will surely deliver thee. He had been instrumented to deliver God's prophet out of the danger and not God would let him live: for he will be behind-hand with none for any service they do, directly or indirectly, for his name: Thou hast saved Jeremiah's life, that was pre-
1. The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, after that Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he had taken him, being bound in chains among all that were carried away captive of Jerusalem and Judah, which were carried away captive unto Babylon. 2. And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, The Lord thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place. 3. Now the Lord had brought it, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you. 4. And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thy hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come, and I will look well unto thee; but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold, all the land is before thee: whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go. 5. Now, while he was not yet gone back, he said, Go back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over all the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people; or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go. 6. Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, to Mizpah, and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.

The title of this part of the book, which begins the chapter, seems unsuited, (The word which came to Jeremiah;) for here is nothing of prophecy in the narrative, but history and history alone.

We have Jeremiah's adhering, by the advice of Nebuzar-adan, to Gedaliah. It should seem that Jeremiah was very honourably fetched out of the court of the prison by the king of Babylon's princes, (ch. xxxix. 14.) but afterward, being found among the people in the city, when orders were given to the inferior officers to bind all they found that were of any fashion, in order to their being carried captives to Babylon, he, through ignorance and mistake, was bound among the rest, and hurried away. 

1. The captain of the guard solemnly owns him to be a true prophet; (v. 2. 3.) "The Lord thy God, whose messenger thou hast been, and in whose name thou hast spok'n, hast by thee pronounced this evil upon this place; they had fair warning given them of it, but they would not take the warning, and now the Lord hath brought it, and as thy mouth he said it, so shall it be, when he said it." He seems thus to justify what he had done, and to glory in it, that he had been God's instrument to fulfill that which Jeremiah had been his messenger to foretell; and upon that account it was indeed the most glorious action he had ever done. He tells all the people that were now in chains before him, It is because ye have sinned against the Lord, that this thing is come upon you. The princes of Israel would never have been brought to acknowledge this, though it was as evident as if it had been written with a sun-beam; but this heathen prince plainly sees it, that a people that had been so favoured as they had been by the divine goodness, would never have been abandoned thus, had they not been very provoking. The people of Israel had been often told from the pulpit, "Thou hast done as thou wouldst not do," but here it is, When he said it, so shall it be, when he said it. Note, Sooner or later, men shall be made sensible that their sin is the cause of all their miseries.

2. He gives him leave to dispose of himself as he thought fit. He loosed him from his chains a while (v. 4.) and invited him to come along with him to Babylon, not as a captive, but as a friend, as a companion; and I will set my eye upon thee, so the word is: "Not only I will look well to thee, but I will show thee respect, will countenance thee, and will see that thou be safe and well provided for."
If he was not disposed to go to Babylon, he might dwell where he pleased in his own country, for it was all now at the disposal of the conquerors. He may go to Anathoth if he please, and enjoy the field he had purchased there. A great change with this good man! He that but lately was tossed from one prison to another, may now walk at liberty from one possession to another.

3. He advises him to go to Gedaliah, and settle with him. This Gedaliah was made governor of the land under the king of Babylon, an honest Jew, who (it is probable) betimes went over with his friends to the Chaldeans, and approved himself so well, that he had this great trust put into his hands; v. 5. While Jeremiah was not yet gone back, but stood considering what he should do, Nebuzar-adan, perceiving him neither inclined to go to Babylon, nor determined whether to go, turned the scale for him, and bid him by all means go to Gedaliah. Suddenly thoughts sometimes prove wise ones. But when he gave this counsel, he did not design to oblige him by it, nor will he take it ill if he do not follow it. Go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee. It is friendly in such cases to give advice, but not friendly to prescribe, and to be angry if our advice be not taken. Let Jeremiah steer what course he pleases, Nebuzar-adan will agree to it, and believe he does for the best. Nor does he only give him his liberty, and an approbation of the measures he shall take, but provides for his support; he gave him authority, either in clothes of money, and so let him go. See how considers the captain of the guard was in his kindness to Jeremiah. He set him at liberty, but it was in a country that was laid waste, and in which, as the posture of it now was, he might have perished, though it was his own country, if he had not thus kindly furnished him with necessaries. Jeremiah not only accepted his kindness, but took his advice; and when he went to Gedaliah, to Mizpah, and dwelt with him, v. 6. Whether we may herein commend his prudence, I know not; the event does not confirm it, for it did not prove at all to his comfort. However, we may commend his pious affection to the land of Israel, that, unless he were forced out of it, as Ezekiel and Daniel and other good men were, he would not forsake it, but chose rather to dwell with the poor in the holy land, than with princes in an unholy one.

7. Now when all the captains of the forces which were in the fields, even they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed unto him men, and women, and children, and of the poor of the land, of them that were not carried away captive to Babylon; 8. Then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Saraih the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezeaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men. 9. And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, swears unto them, and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans; dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. 10. As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to serve the Chaldeans which will come unto us; but ye, gather ye wine, and summer-fruits, and oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken. 11. Likewise, when all the Jews that were in Moab, and among the Ammonites, and in Edom, and that were in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan: 12. Even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer-fruits very much. 13. Moreover, Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah. 14. And said unto him, Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not. 15. Then Johanan the son of Kareah spake to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly, saying, Let me go, I pray thee, and I will slay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know it: wherefore should he slay thee, that all the Jews which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant in Judah perish? 16. But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing; for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael.

We have, in these verses,

1. A bright sky opening upon the remnant of the Jews that were left in their own land, and a comfortable prospect given them of some peace and quietness, even after many years of trouble and terror which they had been afflicted. Jeremiah indeed had never in his prophecies spoken of any such good days reserved for the Jews immediately after the captivity; but Providence seemed to raise and encourage such an expectation, and it would be to that miserable people as life from the dead. Observe the particulars.

1. Gedaliah, one of themselves, is made governor in the land, by the king of Babylon, v. 7. To show that he designed to make and keep them easy, he did not give this commission to one of the princes of Babylon, but to one of their brethren, who, they might be sure, would seek their peace. He was the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, one of the princes. We read of his father, (ch. xxvi. 24.) that he took Jeremiah's part against the people. He seems to be a man of great wisdom and a mild temper, and under whose government the few that were left might be very happy. The king of Babylon had a good opinion of him, and reposed a confidence in him, for to him he committed all that were left behind.

There is great resort to him from all parts, and all those that were now the Jews of the Dispersion came and put themselves under his government and protection. (1.) The great men that had escaped the Chaldeans by force, came and quietly submitted to Gedaliah for their own safety and common preservation. Divers are here named; (v. 8.) they came
with their men, their servants, their soldiers, and so strengthened one another; and the king of Babylon had such a good opinion of Gedaliah his delegate, that he was not at all jealous of the increase of their numbers, but rather pleased with it. (2.) The poor men that had escaped by flight into the neighboring countries of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, were induced by the love they bare to their own land, to return to it again, as soon as they heard that Gedaliah was in authority. 11. 12. deCombos so would be an unsafe, unpleasant country, if there were no government or governors there, and those that loved it dearly would not come back to it till they heard there were. It would be a great reviving to them that were dispersed, to come together again; that were dispersed into foreign countries, to come together in their own country; that were under strange kings, to be under a governor of their own nation. See here, it methinks God remembered mercy, and yet admitted some of them upon a further trial of their obedience.

3. The model of this new government is drawn up and settled by an original contract, which Gedaliah confirmed with an oath, a solemn oath; (v. 9.) He swears to them, and to their men, it is probable, according to the warrant and instructions he had received from his sovereign, to give them assurances. (1.) They must own the property of their lands to be in the Chaldeans; "Come," (says Gedaliah,) "fear not to serve the Chaldeans. Fear not the sin of it." Though the divine law had forbidden them to make leagues with the heathen, yet the divine sentence had obliged them to yield to the king of Babylon. Fear not the reproach of it, and the disapprobation of it to be in your nation; it is what God has brought you to, has bound you to, and it is no disgrace to any to comply with him. Fear not the consequences of it, as if it would certainly make you and yours miserable; no, you will find the king of Babylon not so hard a landlord as you apprehend him to be; if you will but live peaceably, peaceably you shall live; disturb not the government, and it will not disturb you. Serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. If they should make any difficulty of doing personal homage, or should be apprehensive of danger, when the Chaldeans should come among them, Gedaliah, probably by instruction from the king of Babylon, undertakes upon all occasions to act for them, and make their applications acceptable to the king; (v. 29.) "As for me, behold, I will dwell at Anathoth;" and, to shew them in the name of the whole body, if there be occasion, to receive orders, and to pay them their tribute when they come to us. All that passes between them and the Chaldeans shall pass through his hand; and if the Chaldeans put such a confidence in him, surely his own countrymen may venture to do it. Gedaliah is willing thus to give them the assurance of his safety, without being acquainted with them, but being apt to err (as many good men are) on the charitable side, it did not require an oath from them, that they would be faithful to him, else the following mischief might have been prevented. However, protection draws allegiance, though it be not sworn; and, by joining in with Gedaliah, they did, in effect, consent to the terms of government he had offered; but he offered not to save the Chaldeans on the terms of government, but Babylon. But, (2.) Though they own the property of their lands to be in the Chaldeans, yet, upon that condition, they shall have the free enjoyment of them, and all the profits of them; (v. 10.) "Gather ye wine and summer-fruits, and take them for your own use; put them in your vessels, to be laid up for winter-store, as those that do live in a land of peace, and hope for the labour of your hand;" nay, the labour of other people's hands, for you reap what they sowed." Or perhaps they were the spontaneous products of that fertile soil, for which none had labored. And accordingly we find, (v. 11.) that they gathered wine and summer-fruits very much, such as were at present upon the ground, for their corn-harvest was over some time before Jerusalem was taken. While Gedaliah was in care for the public safety, he left them to enjoy the advantages of the public plenty, and, for sight appears, demanded no tribute from them; for he sought not his own profit, but theirs. 11. Here is a dark cloud gathering over this infant state, and threatening a dreadful storm. How soon is this hopeful prospect blasted! For when God begins in judgment he will make an end. It is here intimated to us, 1. That Baalus the king of the Ammonites had a particular spite at Gedaliah, and was contriving to take him off, either out of malice to the nation of the Jews, whose welfare he hated the thought of, or a personal pique against Gedaliah, v. 14. Some make Baalus to signify the queen-mother of the king of the Ammonites, or queen-dowager, as if she were the first mover of this bloody and treacherous design. One would have thought this little remnant might have been safe, when the great king of Babylon protected it; but yet it came to pass that this petty prince or princess Happy they that have the King of kings on their side, who can take the wise in their own craftiness; for the greatest earthly king cannot with all his power secure us against fraud and treachery. 2. That he employed Ishmael, the son of Netthaniah, as the instrument of his malice, instigated him to murder Gedaliah; and that he might have a fair opportunity to do it, he got him to give himself up to him and cursed himself among his subjects, and promised him fealty. Nothing could be more barbarous than the design itself, nor more base than the method of compassing it. How wretchedly is human nature corrupted and degenerated, (even in those that pretend to the best blood,) when it is capable of admitting the thought of such abominable wickedness! Ishmael was of the seed royal, and would therefore be easily tempted to envy and hate one that set up for a governor in Judah, who was not, as he was, of David's line, though he had ever so much of David's spirit. 3. That Johanan, a brisk and active man, having got scent of this plot, informed Gedaliah of it, yet taking it for granted he could not but know of it before, the proofs of the matter being so very plain; that he had become an enemy to them all, and therefore he became to them a very uneasy one, surely thou dost, v. 14. He gave him private intelligence of it, (v. 15.) hoping he would then take the more notice of it. He preferred his service to prevent it, by taking off Ishmael, whose very name was ominous to all the seed of Isaac; I will slay him. Wherefore should he slay thee? Herein he showed more courage and zeal than sense of justice; for if it be lawful to kill for preventing murder, then can be, since malice always suspects the worst. 4. That Gedaliah, being a man of sincerity himself, would by no means give credit to the information given him of Ishmael's treachery. He said, Thou speakest falsely of Ishmael. Herein he discovered more good honour than discretion, more of the innocency of the dove than the wisdom of the serpent. People become uneasy and jealous about them, when they are jealous. Queen Elizabeth said, that she would believe no more evil of her people, than a mother would believe of her own children; yet many have been ruined by being over-confident of the fidelity of these about them.

CHAP. XLI.

It is a very tragical story that is related in this chapter, and shows that evil provokes sinners. The black cloud that was gathering in the foregoing chapter, here bursts in a
dreadful storm. Those few Jews that escaped their cap-
tivity were proud to think that they were still in their
own land, when their brethren were gone they knew not
whether; were food of the wild and summer-fruits they
had lost, and were very secure under Gedaliah's
protectorship, when, on a sudden, even these remains
prove ruins too. 1. Gedaliah is barbarously slain by
Ishmael, v. 1. II. All the Jews that were with him
were slain likewise, (v. 3.), and a pit filled with their
dead bodies, v. 9. III. Some devout men, to the number of
four-score, that were going toward Jerusalem, were drawn
in by Ishmael, and murdered likewise, v. 7. Only
ten of them escaped, v. 8. IV. Those that escaped
the sword were taken prisoners by Ishmael, and carried off
toward the country of the Ammonites, v. 10. V. By the
conduct and courage of Shaphan, though Gedaliah's
slain is not revenged, yet the prisoners are recovered
and he now becomes their commander in chief, v. 11. 16.
VI. His project is to carry them into the land of Egypt,
(v. 17, 18.) which we shall hear more of in the next
chapter.

1. NOW it came to pass in the seventh
month, that Ishmael the son of
Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed
royal, and the princes of the king, even ten
men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son
of Ahikam, to Mizpah; and there they
came eat bread together in Mizpah. 2. Then
arose Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the
ten men that were with him, and smote
Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of
Shaphan, with the sword, and slew him,
whom the king of Babylon had made gover-
nor over the land. 3. Ishmael also slew all
the Jews that were with him, even with
Gedaliah at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans
that were found there, and all the men of war.
4. And it came to pass, the second day after
he had slain Gedaliah, and no man knew it,
5. That there came certain from Shechem,
from Shiloh, and from Samaria, even four-
score men, having their beards shaved, and
their clothes rent, and having cut themselves,
with offerings and incense in their hand, to
bring them to the house of the Lord. 6. And
Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went forth
from Mizpah to meet them, weeping all
along as he went; and it came to pass, as he
met them, he said unto them, Come to
Gedaliah the son of Ahikam. 7. And it
was so, when they came into the midst of
the city, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah
slew them, and cast them into the midst of
the pit, he, and the men that were with him.
8. But ten men were found among them
that said unto Ishmael, Slay us not: for we
have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of
barley, and of oil, and of honey. So he for-
bare, and slew them not among their breth-
ren. 9. Now the pit wherein Ishmael
had cast all the dead bodies of the men,
whom he had slain because of Gedaliah,
was it which Asa the king had made for fear
of Baasha king of Israel; and Ishmael the
son of Nethaniah filled it with them that
were slain. 10. Then Ishmael carried away
captive all the residue of the people that
were in Mizpah, even the king's daughters,
and all the people that remained in Mizpah,
whom Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard
had committed to Gedaliah the son of Ahi-
kam: and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah
carried them away captive, and departed to
go over to the Ammonites.

It is hard to say which is more astonishing, God's
permitting, or men's perpetrating, such villains as
here we had committed. Such base, barbarous,
bloody work is here done by men, who by their birth
had received commissions of mercy on men or
women, by the religion just men, and this done upon those of their own
nature, their own nation, their own religion, and now
their brethren in affliction, when they were all
brought under the power of the victorious Chal-
deans, and smarting under the judgments of God,
upon no provocation, nor with any prospect of ad-
vantage; all done, not only in cold blood, but with
art and management. We have scarcely such an
instance of pernicious cruelty in all the scripture;
so that with John, when he saw the woman drunk with
the blood of the saints, we may well wonder with
great admiration. But God permitted it for the
completing of the ruin of an unhumbled people, and
the filling up of the measure of their judgments, who
had filled up the measure of their iniquities. Let it
possess us with an indignation at the wickedness of
men, and an awe of God's righteousness.

1. Ishmael and his party treacherously killed
Gedaliah himself in the first place. Though the
king of Babylon had made him a great man, had
given him a commission to be governor of the land
which he had conquered; though God had made
him a good man, and a great blessing to his country,
and his agency for its welfare was as life from the
dead; yet neither could secure him. Ishmael, prince of
the seed royal, (v. 1.) and therefore jealous of
Gedaliah's growing greatness, and enraged that he
should merit and accept a commission under the
king of Babylon. He had ten men with him, that
were princes of the king too, guided by the same
peevish resentments that he had; these had been
allured by Gedaliah there, to put measures to his
protection, (ch. xl. 9.) and now came again to make
him a visit; and they did eat bread together in
Mizpah. He entertained them generously, and
entertained no jealousy of them, notwithstanding
the information given him by Johanan. They pre-
tended friendship to him, and gave him no warning
to stand on his guard; he was in sincerity friendly to
them, and did all he could to oblige them, but they
did eat bread with him lifted up the heel against
him. They did not pick a quarrel with him, but
watched an opportunity, when they had him alone,
and assassinated him, v. 2.

2. They likewise put all to the sword that they
found in arms there, both Jews and Chaldeans, all
that were employed under Gedaliah, or were in any
manner to deplore his death, v. 3. As if enough
of the blood of Israelites had not been shed by the
Chaldeans, their own princes here mingled it with
the blood of the Chaldeans. The vine-dressers and
the husbandmen were busy in the fields, and knew
nothing of this bloody massacre; so artfully was it
carried on and concealed!

3. Some good, honest men, that were going all in
tears to lament the desolations of Jerusalem, were
drawn in by Ishmael, and murdered with the rest.
Observe, (1.) From whence they came; (v. 5.)
from Shechem, Samaria, and Shiloh, places that
had been famous, but were now reduced; they be-
longed to the ten tribes, but there were some in
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Jeremiah, XI.

1. [Verse 1-4] Whither they were going; to the house of the Lord, the temple at Jerusalem, which, no doubt, they had heard of the destruction of, and were going to pay their respects to, to see its ruins, that their eye might affect their heart with sorrow for them. They favoured the dust thereof, Ps. cii. 14. They took offerings and incense in their hand, that if they should find any altar there, though it were but an altar of earth, and any priest ready to officiate, they might not be without something to offer; if not, yet they showed their good-will, as Abram, when he could find no altar in the land, provided his own, Gen. xvii. 1. And he poured thereon the same, in token of his having accepted the people's sacrifice, that the Lord might be well pleased with him; but it was a new one, a private altar was gone. The people of God used to go rejoicing to the house of the Lord, but these went in the habit of mourners, with their clothes rent, and their heads shaven; for the providence of God loudly called to weeping and mourning, because it was not with the faithful worshippers of God as in months past. 

3. [Verse 5-8] How they were decoyed into a fatal snare by Ishmael's malice. Hearing of their approach, he resolved to be the death of them too; so bloodthirsty was he! He seemed as if he hated every one that had the name of an Israelite, or the face of an honest man; these pilgrims toward Jerusalem he had a spit to, for the sake of their errand. Ishmael went out to meet them with crocodile's tears, pretending to bewail the desolations of Jerusalem as much as they, and, to try how the stoop above the God of his fathers, he courted them into the town, and found them to have a respect for him, which confirmed him in his resolution to murder them. He said, Come to Gedaliah, pretending he would have them come, and live with him, when really he intended that they should come, and die with him, v. 6. They had heard such a character of Gedaliah, that they were willing enough to be acquainted with him; but instead of this, when they had him in the midst of the town, fell upon them, and slew them, (v. 7.) and, no doubt, took the offerings they had, and converted them to his own use; for he that would not stick at such a murder, would not stick at sacrilege. Notice is taken of his disposing of the dead bodies of these, and the rest that he had slain; he tumbled them all into a great pit, (v. 7.) the same pit that Asa king of Judah had dugged in the royal city, or adjoining to it, when he built or fortified Mizpah, (1 Kings xv. 22.) to be a frontier garrison against Baasha king of Israel, and for fear of him, v. 9. Notice, Those that dig pits with a good intention know not what bad use they may be put to, one time or other. He slew so many, that he could not afford them each a grave, or would not do them so much honour, but threw them all promiscuously into one pit.

Among these last that were doomed to the slaughter, there were ten that obtained a pardon, by working, not on the compassion, but the covetousness, of those that had them at their mercy, v. 8. They said to Ishmael, when he was about to suck their blood, like an insatiable horse-leech, after that of their companions, Stay us not, for we have treasures in the field, will find death inexcusable, and themselves wretchedly deceived. 4. They carried off the people prisoners; the king's daughters, whom the Chaldeans cared not for troubling themselves with, when they had the king's sons; and the poor of the land, the vinedressers and husbandmen, that were committed to Gedaliah's charge, were all led away prisoners toward the country of the Ammonites; (v. 10.) Ishmael probably intending to make a present of them, as the trophies of his barbarous victory, to the king of that country that set him on. This melancholy story is a warning to us, never to be secure in this world. Worse may be yet to come then, when we think the worst is over; and that end of one trouble, which we fancy to be the end of all trouble, may prove to be the beginning of another, of a greater. These here thought, Surely the bitterness of death and of captivity is past; and yet some died by the sword, and others went into captivity. When we think ourselves safe, and begin to be easy, destruction may come that way that we little expected it. There is many a ship wrecked in the harbour. We can never be sure of peace on this side heaven.

11. But when Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done, 12. Then they took all the men, and went to fight with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and found him by the great waters that are in Gibeon. 13. Now it came to pass, that when all the people which were with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, then they were glad. 14. So all the people that Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah cast about, and returned, and went unto Johanan the son of Kareah. 15. But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites. 16. Then took Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah, (after that he had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam,) even mighty men of war, and the women, and the children, and the eunuchs, whom he had brought again from Gibeon: 17. And they departed, and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham, which is by Beth-lehem, to go to enter into Egypt. 18. Because of the Chaldeans: for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon made governor in the land.

It had been well if Johanan, when he gave information to Gedaliah of Ishmael's treacherous design, though he could not obtain leave to kill Ishmael, and to prevent it that way, yet had stayed with Gedaliah; for he, and his captains, and their forces, might have been a life-guard to Gedaliah, and...
terror to Ishmael, and so have prevented the mischief, without the effusion of blood: but it seems, they were out upon some expedition, perhaps no good one, and so were out of the way when they should have been upon the best service. Those that affect to ramble are many times out of their place when they are most needed. However, at length they hear of all the evil that Ishmael had done, (v. 11.) and are resolved to try an after-game, where they would at least try the murderers.

1. We heartily wish Johanan could have taken revenge upon the murderers, but he prevailed only to rescue the captives. They that had shed so much blood, it was pity but their blood should have been shed; and it is strange that vengeance suffered them to live; yet it did. Johanan gathered what forces he could, and went to fight with Ishmael; (v. 1.) and no doubt did with those murderers (for though he concealed it for a time, (v. 4.) yet murder will out,) and which way he was gone, he pursued him, and overtook him by the great pool of Gibeon, which we read of, 2 Sam. ii. 13. And upon his appearing with such a force, Ishmael's heart failed him, his guilty conscience flew in his face, and he durst not stand his ground against an enemy like him, and therefore fled for his life. The most cruel are often the most cowardly. The poor captives were glad when they saw Johanan, and the captains that were with him, looking upon them as their deliverers, (v. 13.) and they immediately found a way to wheel about, and come over to them, (v. 14.) Ishmael not offering to detain them when he saw Johanan. 

Note, Those that would be helped must help themselves. Those captives, though they had not till their conquerors been bated, but took the first opportunity to make their escape, as soon as they saw their friends appear, and their enemies thereby disheartened. Ishmael quitted his prey, to save his life, and escaped with eight men, (v. 13.) It seems, two of his ten men, that were his nobiliary or assassins, spoken of, v. 1. either deserted him, or were killed in the engagement; but he made the best of his way to the Ammonites, as a perfect renegade, that had quite abandoned all relation to the commonwealth of Israel, though he was of the seed royal, and we hear no more of him.

2. We heartily wish that Johanan, when he had rescued the captives, would have sitten down quietly with them, and governed them peaceably, as Gedaliah did; but, instead of that, he is for leading them out of the place, as Ishmael had done, and took them into the land of the Ammonites; so that though he got the command over them in a better way than Ishmael did, and honestly enough, yet he did not use it much better. Gedaliah, who was of a meek and quiet spirit, was a great blessing to them; but Johanan, who was of a fierce and restless spirit, was set over them for their hurt, and to complete their ruin, even after they were, as they thought, redeemed. Thus did God still wait contrary to them. (1.) The resolution of Johanan and the captains was very rash; nothing would serve them but they would go to enter into Egypt, (v. 17.) and, in order to that, they encamped for a time in the habitation of Chimham, by Bethlehem, David's chief. Probably it was some land which David gave to Chimham, his beloved, but which he returned to David's family, at the year of Jubilee, yet still bore the name of Chimham. Here Johanan made his head-quarters, steering his course towards Egypt, either from a personal affection to that country, or an ancient national confidence in the Egyptians for help in distress. Some of the mighty men of war, it seems, had escaped; these he took with him, and the women and children, whom he had recovered from Ishmael, who were thus emptied from vessel to vessel, because they were yet unchanged. (2.) The reason for this resolution was very frivolous. They pretended that they were afraid of the Chaldeans, that they would come and do I know not what with them, because Ishmael had killed Gedaliah, v. 18. I cannot think they really had any apprehensions of danger upon this account; for though it is true that the Chaldeans had cause enough to resent the murder of their viceroy, yet they were not so unreasonable, or unjust, as to revenge upon those who appeared vigorously against the murderers. But they only made use of this as a sham to cover that corrupt inclination of their unbelieving ancestors, which was so strong in them, to return into Egypt. Those will justly lose their comfort in real fears, that excuse themselves in sin with pretended fears.

CHAP. XLII.

Johanan and the captains being strongly bent upon going into Egypt, either their affections or politics advising them to take that course, they had a great desire that God should direct them to do so too; like Balaam, who, when he was determined to go curse Israel, asked God leave. Here is, 1. The fair bargain that was made between Jeremiah and them about consulting God in this matter, v. 1. 6. 2. The message at large which God sent them, in answer to their inquiry; in which, 1. They are commended and encouraged to submit their case to the viceroy of Judah, and assured that if they did so, it should be well with them, v. 7-12. 2. They are forbidden to go to Egypt, and are plainly told that if they did, it would be worse for them, v. 13-18. 3. Their conduct is condemned and reproved for simulating their asking what God's will was in this matter, and disobedience when they were told what it was; and sentence is passed upon them for it, v. 19-22.

1. THEN all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezamiah the son of Hosiah, and all the people, from the least even to the greatest, came near, 2. And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let us beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the Lord thy God, even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us;) 3. That the Lord thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do. 4. Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard you; behold, I will pray unto the Lord your God according to your words, and it shall come to pass, that whatsoever thing the Lord shall answer you, I will declare it unto you; I will keep nothing back from you. 5. Then they said to Jeremiah, The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for which the Lord thy God shall send thee to us. 6. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the Lord our God.

We have reason to wonder how Jeremiah the prophet escaped the sword of Ishmael; it seems he did escape, and it was not the first time that the Lord hid him. It is strange also that in these violent times he was not consulted before now, and his advice asked and taken. But it should seem as if they knew not that a prophet was among them; though
this people were as brands plucked out of the fire, yet have they not returned to the Lord. This people has a revolving and a rebellious heart; and contempt of God and his providence, God and his prophets, is still the sin that most easily besets them. But now at length, to serve a turn, Jeremiah is sought out, and all the captains, Johanan himself not excepted, with all the people from the least to the greatest, made an open visit; they came near, (v. 1.) and intimates that hitherto they had kept at a distance from the prophet, and had been shy of him.

Now hence,
1. They desire him by prayer to ask direction from God what they should do in the present critical juncture, v. 2, 3. They express themselves wonderfully well. (1.) With great respect to the prophet. Though he was poor and low, and under their command, yet they apply themselves to him with humility and submissiveness, as petitioners for his assistance, which yet they intimate their own unworthiness of; Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee. They compliment him thus, in hopes to persuade him to say as they would have him say. (2.) With a great opinion of his interest in heaven; Pray for us, who know not how to pray for ourselves. Pray to the Lord thy God, for he is unworthy to call him ours, nor have we reason to expect any favour from him. (3.) With a great sense of the need of divine direction. They speak of themselves as objects of compassion; We are but a remnant, but a few of many; how easily will such a remnant be swallowed up, and yet it is pity that it should. Thine eyes see what distress we are in, what a plunge we are at; if thou causest any thing, help us. (4.) With desire of divine direction; Let the Lord thy God take this ruin into his thoughts, and under his hand, and show us the way wherein we may walk, and may expect to have his presence with us, and the thing that we may do, the course we may take for our own safety.

Note, In every difficult, doubtful case, our eye must be up to God for direction. They then might expect to be directed by a spirit of prophecy, which is now ceased; but we may still in faith pray to be guided by a spirit of wisdom in our hearts, and the hints of Providence.

2. Jeremiah faithfully promises them to pray for direction for them, and, whatever message God should send to them by him, he would deliver it to them just as he received it, without adding, altering, or diminishing, v. 4. Ministers may hence learn to be exact in their prayers; I will pray for you, according to your words. Though they had slighted him, yet, like Samuel, when he was slighted, he will not sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for them. 1 Sam. xii. 23. (2.) Conscientiously to advise those who desire their advice, as near as they can to the mind of God, not keeping back any thing that is profitable for them. It is pleasing or unpleasing, but to declare to them the whole counsel of God, that they may approve themselves true to their trust.

3. They fairly promise that they will be governed by the will of God, as soon as they know what it is, (v. 5, 6.) and they had the impudence to appeal to God concerning their sinfulness herein, though at the same time they dissemble; The Lord is righteous; and faithful Witness between us; do thou in the fear of God tell us truly what his mind is, and then we will in the fear of God comply with it; and for this, the Lord the Judge be judge between us. Note, Those that expect to have the benefit of good ministers' prayers, must conscientiously hearken to their preaching, and be governed by it, as far as it agrees with the mind of God. Nothing could be better said than this here, Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, that it may be well with us. (1.) They now call God their God, for Jeremiah had encouraged them to call him so; (v. 4.) I will pray to the Lord your God. He is ours, and therefore we will obey his voice. Our relation to God strongly obliges us to obedience. (2.) They promise to obey his voice, because they sent the prophet to them to dissuade them. Note, We do not truly desire to know the mind of God if we do not fully resolve to comply with it when we do know it. (3.) It is an implicit, universal obedience that they here promise. They will do what God appoints them to do, whether it be good, or whether it be evil; "Though it may seem evil to us, yet we will believe that if God commands it, it is certainly good, and we must not dispute it, but do it. Whatever God commands, whether it be easy or difficult, agreeable to our inclinations or contrary to them, whether it be cheap or costly, fashionable or unfashionable, whether we get or lose by it in our worldly interests, if it be our duty, we will do it." (4.) It is upon a very good consideration that they promise this, a reasonable and powerful one, that it may be well with us; which intimates a conviction that they could not expect it should be well with them upon any other terms.

7. And it came to pass, after ten days, that the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah. 3. Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people, from the least even to the greatest, 9. And said unto them, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, unto whom ye sent me to present your supplication before him; 10. If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down; and I will plant you, and not pluck you up: for I repent of the evil that I have done unto you. 11. Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid, be not afraid of him, saith the Lord: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand. 12. And I will shew mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land. 13. But if ye say, We will not dwell in this land, neither obey the voice of the Lord your God, 14. Saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of a trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell; 15. And now, therefore, hear the word of the Lord, ye remnant of Judah; Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there; 16. Then shall it come to pass, that the sword, which ye feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine, whereof ye were afraid, shall follow close after you in Egypt; and there ye shall die. 17. So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt, to sojourn there; they shall die by
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the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: and none of them shall remain or escape from the evil that I will bring upon them. 18. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, As mine anger and my fury hath been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so shall my fury be poured forth upon you, when ye shall enter into Egypt: and ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach; and ye shall see this place no more. 19. The Lord hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah, Go ye not into Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day. 20. For ye dissemble in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the Lord your God, saying, Pray for us unto the Lord our God; and according unto all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it. 21. And now I have this day declared it to you; but ye have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God, nor any thing for the which he hath sent me unto you. 22. Now, therefore, know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go, and to sojourn.

We have here the answer which Jeremiah was sent to deliver to those who employed him to ask counsel of God.

1. It did not come immediately, not till ten days after, v. 7. They were thus long held in suspense, perhaps to punish them for their hypocrisy, or to show that Jeremiah did not speak of himself, nor what he would; for he could not speak when he would, but must wait for instructions. However, it teaches us to continue waiting upon God for direction in our way. The vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak.

2. When it did come, he delivered it publicly, before all those to whom they had sent him, and therefore they were bound in honour and duty to observe it. And this he tells them.

1. That it is the will of God that they would stay where they were; and his promise, that if they do so, it shall undoubtedly be well with them; he would have them still to abide in this land, v. 10. Their brethren were forced out of it into captivity, and they were to continue in the same place; they were to entertain a hope that they may stay in it, and a duty to stay in it. Let those whose lot is in Canaan, never quit it while they can keep it. It had been enough to oblige them, if God had only said, "I charge you upon your allegiance, to abide still in the land;" but he rather persuades them to it as a Friend than commands it as a Prince.

(1.) He expresses a very tender concern for them in their present calamitous condition; It repented me of the evil that I have done unto you. Though they had shown small sign of their repenting of their sins, yet God, as one grieved for the misery of Israel, (Judg. x. 16.) begins to repent of the judgments he had brought upon them for their sins. Not that he changed his mind, but he was very ready to change his way, and to return in mercy to them. God's time to repent himself concerning his servants is when he sees that, as here, their strength is gone, and there is none shut up or left, Deut. xxxii. 36.
though God oppose you in it, both by his word and by his providence, then take what follows." Now the reason they go upon in this resolution, is, that in Egypt we shall see no war, nor have hunger of bread, as we have had for a long time in this land, v. 14. Note, It is folly to quit our place, especially to quit the holy land, because we meet with trouble in it; but greater folly to think by changing our place to escape the judgments of God, and that evil which pursues sinners in every way of disobedience, and which there is no escaping but by returning to our allegiance.

(2.) The sentence passed upon them for this sin, if they will persist in it. It is pronounced in God's name; (v. 15.) "Hear the word of the Lord, ye remnant of Judah, who think that because you are a remnant, you must be spared of course, (v. 2.) and indulged in your own humour. [1.] Did the sword and famine frighten them? Those very evil eyes shall pursue them into Egypt, shall overtake them, and overcome them, there; (v. 16, 17.) "You think, because war and famine have long raging in this land, that they are entailed upon it; whereas, if you trust in God, he can make even this land a land of peace to you; you think they are confined to it, and if you can get clear of this land, you shall get out of the good and evil; but God will send them after you wherever you go." Note, The evils we think to escape by sin, we certainly and inevitably run ourselves upon. The men that go to Egypt, in contradiction to God's will, to escape the sword and famine, shall die in Egypt by sword and famine. We may apply it to the common calamities of human life; those that are impatient of them, and think to avoid them by changing their place, will find that they are deprived of it, and that they do not at all mend themselves; the grievances common to men will meet them wherever they go; all our removes in this world are but from one wilderness to another; still we are where we were. [2.] Did the desolations of Jerusalem frighten them? Were they willing to get as far as they could from them? They shall meet with the second part of them too in Egypt; (v. 18.) "As my anger and fury have been poured out here upon Jerusalem, so they shall be poured out upon you in Egypt. Note, Those that have by sin made God their Enemy, will find him a consuming Fire, wherever they go. And ye shall be an execution and an astonishment." The Hebrews were of an abomination to the Egyptians; (Gen xlviii. 22.) and now the. Jews were of an abomination to the Egyptians. When God's professing people mingle themselves with infidels, and make their court to them, they lose their dignity, and make themselves a reproach.

3. That God knew their hypocrisy in their inquiries of him, and that when they asked what he would have them to do, they were resolved to take their own way; and therefore the sentence which was before pronounced conditionally is made absolute; but which of them would take the blessing and the curse, in the close he makes application of what he had said. And here, (1.) He solemnly protests that he had faithfully delivered his message, v. 19. The conclusion of the whole matter is, "Go not down into Egypt, you disobey the command of God if you do, and what I have said shall be your witness against you; for whether you will or whether you will not, I have plainly admonished you, you cannot now plead ignorance of the mind of God." (2.) He charges them with base dissimulation in the application they made to him for divine direction; (v. 20.) "You dissembled in your hearts, you professed one thing and intended another, you promised what you never meant to perform." You have used deceit against your souls; so the margin reads it: for those that think to put a cheat upon God, will prove in the end to have put a damning cheat upon themselves. (3.) He is already aware that they are determined to go contrary to the command of God; probably, they discovered it in their countenance and secret mutterings already, before he had finished his discourse. However, he spake from him who knew their hearts; "Ye have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God, ye have broken the dispensation he made to you, and of his close of his farewell sermon, had told them. (Dut. xxxi. 27, 29.) I know thy rebellion and thy stiff neck—and that ye will corrupt yourselves. Admire the patience of God, that he is pleased to speak to those who, he knows, will not regard him, and deal with those who, he knows, will deal treacherously, 1st. xviii. 8. (4.) He therefore reads them their doom, repenting what he had told before, Know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, v. 22. God's threatenings may be vilit, but cannot be nullified, by the unbelief of man. Famine and pestilence shall pursue these sinners; for there is no place privileged from divine arrests, nor can any malefactors go out of God's jurisdiction. Ye shall die in the place whither ye desire to go. Note, We know not what is good for ourselves; and that often proves afflicting, and sometimes fatal, which we are most fond of, and have our hearts most set upon.

CHAP. XLIII.

Jeremiah had faithfully delivered his message from God, in the foregoing chapter, and the case was made so very plain by it, that one would have thought there needed no more words about it; but we find it quite otherwise. Here is, 1. The people's content of this message; they denied it to be the word of God, (v. 1. 3.) and then made no difficulty of going directly contrary to it. Into Egypt they went, and took Jeremiah himself along with them, v. 3. 2. God's pursuit of them will be manifest, for the king of Babylon's pursuit of them into Egypt, v. 8. 13.

1. And it came to pass, that when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking unto all the people all the words of the Lord their God, for which the Lord their God had sent him to them, even all these words, 2. Then spake Azariah the son of Hosheaiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely: the Lord our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there: 3. But Baruch the son of Neriah setteath thee on against us, for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon. 4. So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the Lord, to dwell in the land of Judah; 5. But Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, took all the remnant of Judah, that were returned from all nations whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah; 6. Even men, and women, and children, and the king's daughters, and every person that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah
When God said to the builders of Babel, may we truly said of this people that Jeremiah is now dealing with; "Now nothing will be restrained from the future, they have imagined to do, Gen. 51:6. They have a fancy for Egypt, and to Egypt they will go, whatever God himself saith to the contrary. Jeremiah made them hear all he had to say, though he saw them uneasy at it; it was what the Lord their God had sent him to speak to them, and they shall have it all. And now let us see what they have to say.

1. They deny it to be a message from God; Johanan, and all the proud men, said to Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely, v. 2. See here, (1.) What was the cause of their disobedience, it was pride; only by that comes contention both with God and man: they were proud men that gave the lie to the prophet. They could not bear the contradiction of their sentiments, and the contradiction of the design, not of the prophet only, but of the divine will itself. Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord that I should obey him? Exod. v. 2. The proud, unhumbled heart of man is one of the most daring enemies God has on this side hell. (2. What was the colour for their disobedience. They would not acknowledge it to be the word of God; The Lord hath not sent thee out to conform themselves to scripture-rules, and so an obstinate infidelity is made the sorry subterfuge of a willful disobedience. If God had spoken to them by an angel, or as he did from Mount Sinai, they would have said that it was a delusion. Had they not consulted Jeremiah as a prophet? Had not he waited to receive instructions from God what to say to them? Had not what he said all the usual marks of prophecy upon it? Was not the prophet himself embarking in the same bottom with them? What interests could he have separate from theirs? Had he not always approved himself an Israelite indeed; And had not God proved him a prophet indeed? Had any of his words ever fallen to the ground? Why truly they had some good thoughts of Jeremiah, but they suggest, (v. 5.) Baruch sets thee on against us. A likely thing, that Baruch should be in a plot to deliver them into the hands of the Chaldeans; and what would he get by that? If Jeremiah and he had been so well affected to the Chaldeans as they would represent them, they would have gone away at first with Nebuzar-adan, when he courted them, to Babylon, and not have staid to take their lot with this despised, ungrateful remnant. But the Lord will not suffer them thus to fall against malice and slander. Or, if Baruch had been so ill disposed, could they think Jeremiah would be so influenced by him as to make God's name an authority to patronize so villainous a purpose? Note, Those that are resolved to contradict the great ends of the ministry, are industrious to bring a bad name upon it. When men will persist in sin, they represent those that would turn them from it as designing men for themselves, nay, as ill-designing men against their neighbours. It is well for persons who are thus misrepresented, that their witness is in heaven, and their record on high.

2. They determine to go to Egypt however. They resolve not to dwell in the land of Judah, as God had ordered them, (v. 4.) but to go themselves with one consent, and to take all that they had under their power along with them to Egypt. These their ends from all the nations whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah, out of a sincere affection to that land, they would not leave to their liberty, but forced them to go with them into Egypt, (v. 5.) men, women, and children, (v. 6.) along journey into a strange country, an idolatrous country, a country that had never been kind or faithful to Israel; yet thither they would go, though they deserted their own land and threw themselves out of God's protection. It is the folly of men, that they know not when they are well off; and often ruin themselves by endeavoring to mend themselves, and it is the prudence of great men to force those they have under their power to follow them, though ever so much against their duty and interest. These proud men compelled even Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch his scribe to go along with them to Egypt; they carried them away as prisoners, partly to punish them, and a greater punishment they could not inflict upon them than to force them against their conscience, and to act a thing contrary to men's souls, even to good men's souls, Bow down, that we may go over, partly to put some reputation upon themselves and their own way; though the prophets were under a force, they would make the world believe that they were voluntary in going along with them. Who could have blamed them for acting contrary to the word of the Lord, if the prophets themselves had acted so? They came to Taïphanes, a famous city of Egypt, (so called from a queen of that name, 1 Kings xii. 19.) the same with Hanes; (Isa. xxx. 4.) it was now the metropolis, for Pharaoh's house was there, (v. 9.) no place could serve these proud men to settle in but the royal city, and near the court; so little mindful were they of Joseph's warning, who would have had them to brethren settle in Goshen. If they had had the spirit of Israelites, they would have chosen rather to dwell in the wilderness of Judah than in the most populous, populous cities of Egypt.

3. Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah in Taïphanes, saying, 9. Take great stones in thy hand, and hide them in the clay in the brick-kiln, which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Taïphanes, in the sight of the men of Judah; 10. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them. 11. And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, and deliver such as are for death, to death; and such as are for captivity, to captivity; and such as are for the sword, to the sword. 12. And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them, and carry them away captives; and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment; and he shall go forth from thence in peace. 13. He shall break also the images of Beth-sher-
mesh, that is in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire.

We have here, as also in the next chapter, Jeremiah prophesying in Egypt. Jeremiah was now in Tahpanhes, for there his lords and masters were; he was there among the Chaldeans, and treated like a hired servant; but there, 1. He received the word of the Lord; it came to him. God can find his people, with the visits of his grace, wherever they are; and when his ministers are bound, yet the word of the Lord is not bound. The spirit of prophecy was not confined to the land of Israel. When Jeremiah went into Egypt, not out of choice, but by constraint, God withdrew not his wonted favour from him. What he received of the Lord he delivered to the people. Wherever we are, we must endeavour to do good, for that is our business in this world.

Now we find two messages which Jeremiah was appointed and intrusted to deliver, when he was in Egypt. We may suppose that he rendered what services he could to his countrymen in Egypt, at least as far as they would be acceptable, in performing the ordinary duties of a prophet, praying for them, and instructing and comforting them; but only two messages of his, which he had received immediately from God, are recorded; one in this chapter, relating to Egypt itself, and foretelling its destruction; the other in the next chapter, relating to the Jews in Egypt.

God had told them before, that if they went into Egypt, the sword they feared should follow them; here he tells them further, that the sword of Nebuchadrezzar, which they were in a particular manner afraid of, should follow them.

1. This is foretold by a sign. Jeremiah must take great stones, such as are used for foundations, and lay them in the clay of the furnace, or brick-kiln, which is in the open way, or beside the way that leads to Pharaoh's house; (v. 8.) some remarkable place in view of the royal palace. Egypt was famous for brick-kilns, witness the slavery of the Israelites there, whom they forced to make bricks, (Exod. v. 7.) which perhaps was never remembered against them. The foundation of Egypt's desolation was laid in those brick-kilns, in that clay. This he must do, not in the sight of the Egyptians, (they knew not Jeremiah's character;) but in the sight of the men of Judah that went, was sent, that thus he could not prevent their going into Egypt, he might bring them to repent of their going.

2. It is foretold in express words, as express as can be.

1. That the king, the present king of Babylon, Nebuchadrezzar, the very same that had been employed in the destruction of Jerusalem, should come into the land of Egypt, should make himself master even of this royal city, that he should set his throne in that very place where these stones were laid, v. 10. This minute circumstance is particularly foretold, that, when it was accomplished, they might be put in mind of the prophecy, and confirmed in their belief of the extent and certainty of the divine preservation, to which both these small and momentous events are evident. God calls Nebuchadrezzar his servant, because herein he executed God's will, accomplished his purposes, and was instrumental to carry on his designs. Note, The world's princes are God's servants, and he makes what use he pleases of them, and even those that know him not, nor aim at his honour, are the tools with which his providence makes use of.

2. That he should destroy many of the Egyptians, and have them all at his mercy; (v. 11.) He shall smite the land of Egypt; and 'twas it had been always a warlike nation, yet none shall be able to make head against him, but whom he will he shall slay, and by what sort of death he will, whether pestilence, (for that is here meant by death, as ch. xv. 2.) by shutting them up in places infected, or by the sword of war or justice, in cold blood or hot. And whom he will, he shall save alive, and carry them hither and thither, (ch. xvi. 1.) and then brought the Chaldeans thither, and so did but ill repose those that entertained them. They who promised to protect Israel from the king of Babylon exposed themselves to him.

3. That he shall destroy the idols of Egypt, both the temples, and the images, of their gods; (v. 12.) He shall burn the houses of the gods of Egypt, but it shall be with a fire of God's kindling; he will bring God's wrath fast upon them, and then he burn some of them, and carries others captive, Isa. xlv. 1. Beth-shemesh, or the house of the sun, was so called from a temple there built to the sun, where at certain times there was a general meeting of the worshippers of the sun. The statues or standing images there he shall break in pieces, (v. 13.) and cast into the midst of the sea, as the sea itself is mean in its form, and intimates that he should lay all waste, when even the temple and the images should not escape the fury of the victorious army. The king of Babylon was himself a great idolater, and a patron of idolatry, he had his temples and images in honour of the sun, as well as the Egyptians, and yet he is employed to destroy the idols of Egypt. Thus God sometime makes one wicked man, or wicked nation a scourge and plague to another.

4. That he shall make himself master of the land of Egypt, and none shall be able to plead its cause, or avenge its quarrel; (v. 12.) He shall array himself with the rich spoils of the land of Egypt, both beautify and fortify himself with them; he shall array himself with them as ornaments and as armour, and this, though it shall be a rich and heavy booty; being expert in war, and expeditious, he shall slip on with as much ease, and in as little time, in comparison, as a shepherd slips on his garment, when he goes to turn out his sheep in a morning. And, being loaded with the wealth of many other nations, the fruits of his conquests, he shall make no more of the spoils of the land of Egypt than of a shepherd's coat. And when he has taken what he pleases, (as Benhadad three times did, 1 Kings x. 26.) he shall go forth in peace, without any molestation given him, or any precipitation for fear of it, so effectually reduced shall the land of Egypt be. This destruction of Egypt by the king of Babylon is foretold, Ezek. xxix. 19, and xxx. 10. Babylon lay by a great distance from Egypt, and yet from thence the destruction of Egypt comes; for God can make those judgments strike home which are far-fetched.

CHAP. XLIV.

In this chapter we have, I. An awakening sermon which Jeremiah preached to the Jews in Egypt, to prepare them for their distant journey, notwithstanding what favours they had been given them both by the word and the rod of God, and to threaten the judgments of God against them for it, v. 1. 14. II. The impudent and insolent contempt which the people put upon this admonition, and their declared resolution to persist in their idolatries notwithstanding, in despite of God and Jeremiah, v. 15. 19. III. The sentence passed upon them for their obstinacy, that God should cut off the carcases and publish in Egypt, except a very small number; and, as a sign or earnest of it, the king of Egypt should shortly fall into the hands of the king of Babylon, and be unable any longer to protect them, v. 20. 30.

1. The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews which dwell in the land of Egypt, which dwell at Migdol,
at Taanach, and at Noph, and in the country of Pathros, saying, 2. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Ye have seen all the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, and upon all the cities of Judah; and, behold, this day they are a desolation, and no man dwelleth therein; 3. Because of their wickedness which they have committed, to provoke me to anger, in that they went to burn incense, and to serve other gods, whom they knew not, neither they, you, nor your fathers. 4. Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate. 5. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods. 6. Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted and desolate, as at this day. 7. Therefore now thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel, Wherfore commit ye this great evil against your souls, to cut off from you man and woman, child and suckling, out of Judah, to leave you none to remain; 8. In that ye provoke me unto wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense unto other gods in the land of Egypt, whither ye be gone to dwell, that ye might cut yourselves off, and that ye might be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth? 9. Have ye forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and the wickedness of the kings of Judah, and the wickedness of their wives, and your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they have committed in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem? 10. They are not humbled even unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes, that I set before you, and before your fathers. 11. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah. 12. And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, and fall in the land of Egypt; they shall even be consumed by the sword and by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine; and they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach. 13. For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: 14. So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to which they have a desire to return to dwell there; for none shall return but such as shall escape.

The Jews in Egypt are now dispersed into divers parts of the country, into Migdol and Noph, and other places, and Jeremiah is sent on an errand from God to them, which he delivered either when he had the most of them together, in Pathros, (v. 15.) or going about from place to place preaching to this purport. He delivered this message in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, and in it, 1. God puts them in mind of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, which, though the captives by the rivers of Babylon were daily mindful of them, (Ps. cxlvii.) the fugitives in the cities of Egypt seem to have forgotten, and needed to be put in mind of, though these desolations, one would have thought, had not been so long out of sight as to become unremembered. (v. 2.) The Lord of hosts, and all the remnant of his people, how much soever they were afflicted with the working of his judgments, yet he knew how to work it, and designed it as a preparation for the better, and was pleased to send angels, and to cause rivers to run out of Egypt, and to rebuke the iniquities of his people. 3. He puts them in mind of the frequent fair warning he had given them by his word not to serve other gods, the contempt of which warnings was a great aggravation of their idolatry, v. 4. The prophets were sent with a great deal of care to call to them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate. It becomes us to speak of sin with the utmost dread and detestation as an abominable thing: it is certainly so, for it is that which God hates, and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth. Call it grievous, call it odious, that we may by all means possible put ourselves and others out of love with it. It becomes us to give warning of the danger of sin, and the fatal consequences of it, with all seriousness and earnestness; Oh, do not do it! If you love God do not, for it is provoking to him; if you love your own souls, do not, for it is destructive to them.” Let conscience do this for us in an hour of temptation, when we are ready to yield. O take heed; do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates; for if God hates it, thou shouldest hate it. But did they regard what God said to them? No! They hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, (v. 5.) they were most persistent in their idolatries; and you see what came of it, therefore God’s anger was poured out upon them, as at this day. Now this was intended for warning to you, who have not only heard the judgments of God’s mouth, as they did, but have likewise seen the judgments of his hand, by which
you should be startled and awakened, for they were
inflicted in terrorem—that others might hear and
fear, and do no more as they did, lest they should
fear as they fared.

4. He reproves them for, and upbraideth them with,
their continued idolatries, now that they were come
into Egypt; (v. 8.) You burn incense to other gods
in the land of Egypt; therefore God forbade them
to go into Egypt, because he knew it would be a
snare to them. Those whom God sent into the land of
the Chaldeans, though that was an idolatrous coun-
try, were there, by the power of God, saved out
from idolatry; but those who went against God's
mind into the land of the Egyptians, were there by
the power of their own corruption, more wedded
than ever to their idolatries; for when we thrust our-
selves without cause or call into places of tempta-
tion, it is just with God to leave us to ourselves. In
doing this, (1.) They did a great deal of injury to
themselves and their families; You commit this
great evil against your souls, (v. 7.) you wrong them,
you deceiveth them with that which is false, you de-
stroy them, for it will be fatal to them." Note, In
sinning against God, we sin against our own souls,
"It is the ready way to cut yourselves off from all
comfort and hope, (v. 8.) to cut off your name and
honour; so that you will, both by your sin and by
your misery, become a curse and a reproach among
all nations. You that are brought into it, was written
as a Jew. It is the ready way to cut off from
you all your relations, all that you should have joy
of, and have your families built up in, man and wom-
man, child and suckling, so that Judah shall be a
land lost for want of heirs." (2.) They filled up the
measure of the iniquity of their fathers, and, as if
that had been too little for them, added to it; (v. 9.)
"Have ye got yourselves into the wickedness of those
you are gone before you, that you are not humbled for
it as you ought to be, and afraid of the consequences
of it?" Have you forgotten the punishments of your
fathers? So some read it. "Do you not know how
dear their idolatry cost them? And yet dare you
continue in that vain conversation received by tra-
tition from your fathers, though you received the
curse with it?" He reminds them of the sins and
punishments of Israel and Judah, who, great as they
were, escaped not the judgments of God for their
idolatry; yet, and they should have taken warning by
the wickedness of those whom God had seduced
them to idolatry. In the original it is, And of his
wives, which, Dr. Lightfoot thinks, tacitly reflects
upon Solomon's wives, particularly his Egyptian
wives, to whom the idolatry of the kings of Judah
owed its original. "Have you forgotten this, and
what came of it, that you dare venture upon the
same wicked courses?" (See Neh. xiii. 18, 26.)
"Nay, to come to your own times, Have you for-
gotten your own wickedness and the wickedness of
your wives, when you lived in prosperity in Jeru-
usalem, and what ruin it brought upon you? But,
alas! to what purpose do I speak to you?" (says
God to the prophet, v. 11.) The four words, "be-
hated, unthankful, full of all the abominable prov-
idences that they have been under. They have not
feared nor walked in my law." Note, Those that
walk not in the law of God, thereby show that they
are destitute of the fear of God.

5. He threatens their utter ruin for their persisting
in their idolatry, now that they were in Egypt. Judah
is given against them, as before, (ch. xiii. 22.) that they shall bring into Egypt the deeds they
have gone forth, and shall not be called back; they set
their faces to go into the land of Egypt, (v. 12.)
were resolute in their purpose against God, and now
God is resolute in his purpose against them; I will
set my face to cut off all Judah, v. 11. They that
think not only to affront but to contrat God Al-
mighty, will find themselves outcast; for the face
of the Lord is against them that do evil, Ps. xxxiv.
18. It is here threatened, concerning the idols
and Jews in Egypt, (1.) They shall all be con-
sumed, without exception, no degree or order among
them shall escape; They shall fall, from the least to
the greatest, (v. 12.) high and low, rich and poor.
(2.) That they shall be consumed by the very same
judgments which God made use of for the punish-
ment of Jerusalem, the sword, famine, and pes-
tilence, v. 12, 13. They shall not be wasted by
natural deaths, as Israel in the wilderness, but by
these sore judgments, which, by flying into Egypt,
they thought to get out of the reach of. (3.) That
none (except a very few that will narrowly escape)
shall ever return to the land of Judah again, v. 14.
They thought, being nearer, that they stood fairer
for a return to their own land than those that were
carried to Babylon; yet those shall return, and those
shall not; for the way in which God has promised
us any comfort is much surer than that in which we
have projected it for ourselves. Observe, Those
that are fretful and discontented will be uneasy,
and fond of change, wherever they are. The Israel-
ites, when they were in the land of Judah, desired
to go into Egypt; (ch. xiii. 22.) but when they were
in Egypt, they desired to return to the land of Judah
again; they lifted up their soul to it; (so it is in the
margin,) which denotes an earnest desire. But be
cause they would not dwell there when God com-
mended it, they shall not dwell there when they de-
sire it. If we walk contrary to God, he will walk
contrary to us. How can those expect to be well
off, who would not know when they were so, though
God himself told them? 15. Then all the men which knew that
their wives had burnt incense unto other gods,
and all the women that stood by, a great multitude,
even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, an-
swered Jeremiah, saying, 16. As for
word which thou hast spoken unto us in the
name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee. 17. But we will certainly do
whosoever thing goeth forth of our own
mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of
heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto
her, as we have done, we, and our fathers,
our kings, and our princes, in the cities of
Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for
they had we plenty of victuals, and were
well, and saw no evil. 18. But since we
left off to burn incense to the queen of
heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto
her, we have wanted all things, and have been
consumed by the sword and by the famine
19. And when we burnt incense to the
queen of heaven, and poured out drink-
offering unto her, did we make her cakes
to worship her, and pour out drink-offerings
unto her without our men? We have here the people's obstinate refusal to sub-
mits to the power of the word of God in
the month of Jeremiah. We have scarcely such an
instance of downright, daring contradiction to God
himself as this, or such an avowed rebellion of the
carnal mind. Observe,
I. The persons who thus set God and his judg-
ment at defiance; it was not some one that was thus
We find, 1. That the women had been more addicted to idolatry and superstition than the men, not because the men stuck closer to the true God and the true religion than the women, but, I fear, because they were generally atheists, and were for no God and no religion at all, and therefore could easily allow their wives to be of a false religion, and to worship false gods. 2. That consciousness of guilt made them impatient of reproof; They knew that their actions were more objectionable to other gods, and that they had contemnented them in it, and the women that stood by knew that they had joined with them in their idolatrous usages; so that what Jeremiah said touched them in a sore place, which made them kick against the pricks, as children of Belial, that will not hear the yoke.

11. The reply which these persons made to Jeremiah, and in him to God himself; it is in effect the same with theirs who had the impudence to say to the Almighty, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.

1. They declare their resolution not to do as God commanded them, but what they themselves had a mind to do; that is, they would go on to worship the moon, here called the queen of heaven; yet some understand that they joined with others in worshipping MARS in Egypt, (ch. xlii. 13.) and had been so at Jerusalem; (2 Kings xxiii. 11.) and they say, that the Hebrew word for the sun being feminine, it may not unly be called the queen of heaven. And others understand it of all the hosts of heaven, or the frame of heaven, the whole machine, ch. vi. 18. These daring sinners do not now go out to make excuses for their refusal to obey, nor suggest that Jeremiah spoke from himself, and not from God, (as before, ch. xlii. 2.) but they own that he spake to them in the name of the Lord, and yet tell him flatly, in so many words, "We will not hearken unto thee; we will do that which is forbidden, and run the venture of that which is threatened." Note, Those that live in disobedience to God commonly grow worse and worse, and the heart is more and more hardened by the course of sin. Here is the true language of the rebellious heart: We will certainly do whatsoever things goe forth out of our own mouth, let God and his prophets say what they please to the contrary. What they said, many think, who yet have not arrived at such a degree of impudence as to speak it out. It is that which the young man would be at in the days of his youth; he would walk in the way of his heart, and the sight of his eyes, and would have and do everything he has a mind to, Eccl. xi. 9.

2. They give some sort of reasons for their resolution; for the most absurdly and unreasonably wicked men will have something to say for themselves, till the day comes when every mouth shall be silenced, ch. iii. 9. They have a great deal of nonsense, and a great deal of nonsense, to say. (1.) They plead many of those things which the advocates for Rome make the marks of a true church, and not only justly but magnify themselves with; and these here have as much right to them as they have. [1.] They plead antiquity; We are resolved to burn incense to the queen of heaven, for our fathers did so; it is a practice that pleads prerogative, and accordingly we pretend to be more ancient than our fathers? [2.] They plead authority; they that have power practised it themselves, and prescribed it to others; Our kings and our princes did it, whom God set over us, and who were of the seed of David. [3.] They plead purity; it was not here and there one that did it, but we, we all with one consent, we that are a great multitude, (v. 15.) we did it. [4.] They plead universality; it was not done here and there, but in the cities of Judah. [5.] They plead visibility; it was not done in a corner, in dark and shady groves only, but in the streets, openly and publicly. [6.] They plead that it was the practice of the ancient church, the Hebrews; it was not now learned first in Egypt, but it had been done in Jerusalem. [7.] They plead prosperity; then had we plenty of bread, and of all good things, we were well, and saw no evil. All the former pleas, I fear, were too true in fact; God's witnesses against their idolatry were few and hid; Eliphaz thought that he was left alone; and this last might perhaps be true as to some peculiar persons, but as to their nation, they were still under rebukes for their rebellions, and there was no peace to them that went out or came in, 2 Chron. xv. 5. But supposing all to be true, yet this does not at all excuse them from idolatry; it is the law of God that we must be ruled and judged by, not the practice of men.

(2.) They suggest that the judgments they had of late been under, were brought upon them for leaving off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, v. 18. So perversely did they misconstrue Providence, though God, by his prophets, had so often explained it to them, and the thing itself spoke the direct contrary! Since we forsake our idolatries, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword, and have been made a proverb and a byword among the heathen, and have been evil spoken of among all that dwell round about us; but they still retained their idols in their heart, and an affection to their old sins; but they would have it thought that it was because they had forsaken the acts of sin. Thus the afflictions which should have been for their welfare, to part between them and their sins, being misinterpreted, did but confirm them in their sins. Thus, in the first ages of Christianity, when God, as the nations had been in idolatrous for opposing the Christians, and persecuting them, they put a contrary sense upon the calamities, as if they were sent to punish them for conniving at the Christians, and tolerating them, and cried, Christians ad leones—Throw the Christians to the lions. Yet, if it had been true, as they said here, that since they returned to the service of the true God, the God of Israel, they were saved and happy, was that a provocation why they should revolt from him again? That was as much as to say that they served not him, but their own bellies. Those who know God, and put their trust in him, will serve him, though he starve them, though he slay them, though they never see a good day with him in this world, being well assured that they shall not lose by him in the end.

(3.) They plead that though the women were most forward and active in their idolatries, yet they did it with the consent and approbation of their husbands; the women were busy to make cakes for meat-offerings to the queen of heaven, and to prepare and pour out the drink-offerings, v. 19. We found, before, that it was their work, ch. vii. 18. But above we do not now say that it is unknown to them, as to give them occasion to be jealous of us; No; the fathers kindled the fire, while the women kneaded the dough; the men that were our heads, whom we were bound to learn of, and to be obedient to, taught us to do it by their example. Note, It is sad when those who are in the nearest relation to each other, who should quicken each other's spirits, and bring one another to heaven, harden each other in sin, and so ripen one another for hell. Some understand this as spoken by the husbands, (v. 15.) who plead that they did not do it without their men, without their elders and rulers, their great men, and men in authority; but because the making of the cakes, and the pouring out of the drink-offerings, are expressly spoken of as the women's work, (ch. vii. 18.) it
seems rather to be understood as their plea: but it was a frivolous plea. What would it avail them to be able to say that it was according to their husbands' mind, when they knew that it was contrary to their God's mind?

20. Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men, and to the women, and to all the people which had given him that answer, saying, 21. The incense that ye burnt in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye, and your fathers, your kings, and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the Lord remember them, and came it not into his mind? 22. So that the Lord could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day. 23. Because you have burnt incense, and because ye have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day. 24. Moreover, Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the Lord, all Judah that are in the land of Egypt; 25. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows. 26. Therefore hear ye the word of the Lord, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the Lord, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah, in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord God liveth. 27. Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good; and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them. 28. Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah; and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs. 29. And this shall be a sign unto you, saith the Lord, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil: 30. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will give Pharaoh-hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life, as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon his enemy, and that sought his life.

Daring sinners may speak many a bold word, and many a big word, but, after all, God will have the last word; for he will be justified when he speaks; and all flesh, even the proudest, shall be silent before him. Prophets may be run down, but God cannot; not that the prophet will not. I. Jeremiah has something to say to them from himself, which he could say without a spirit of prophecy, and that was to rectify their mistake, (a wilful mistake it was,) concerning the calamities they had been under, and the true intent and meaning of them. They said that these miseries came upon them because they had now left off burning incense to the queen of heaven; "No," says he, "it was because you had formerly done it, not because you had now left it off." When they gave him that answer, he immediately replied, (v. 20.) that the incense which they and their fathers had burnt to other gods did indeed go unpunished a great while, for God was long-suffering toward them, and during the day of his patience it was, perhaps, as they said, well with them, and they saw no evil; but at the length the Lord saw the spoiling of his habitation, and he could no longer bear, (v. 22.) but began a controversy with them, whereupon some of them did a little reform, their sins left them, for so it might be said, rather than that they left their sins. But their old guilt being still upon the score, and their corrupt inclinations still the same, God remembered against them the idolatries of their fathers, their kings, and their princes, in the streets of Jerusalem, which they, instead of being ashamed of, gloried in, as a justification of them in their idolatries; they all came into his mind, (v. 21.) all the abominations which they had committed, (v. 22.) and all their discourses to the voice of the Lord, (v. 23.) all were brought to account; and therefore, to punish them for these is their land a desolation and a curse, at this day; (v. 25.) therefore, not for their late reformation, but for their old wickedness, is all this evil happened to them, as at this day, v. 25. Note, The right understanding of the cause of our troubles, one would think, should go far toward the cure of our sins. Whatever evil comes upon us, it is because we have sinned against the Lord, and should therefore stand in awe, and sin not. II. Jeremiah has something to say to them, to the women, particularly, from the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; they have given their answer, now let them hear God's reply, v. 24. Judah, that dwells in the land of Egypt, has God speaking to them, even there, that is their privilege; let them observe what he says, that is their duty, v. 26. Now God, in his reply, tells them plainly,

1. That since they were fully determined to persist in their idolatry, God was fully determined to proceed in a controversy with them; if they would go on to provoke him, he would go on to punish them, and see which would get the better at last. God repeats what they had said; (v. 25.) "You and your wives are agreed in this obstinacy, you have spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hands, you have said it, and you stand to it, have said it, and go on to do it, you have vowed and sworn, and now we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven," as if, though it were a sin, yet their having vowed to do it, were sufficient to justify them in the doing of it; whereas no man can by his vow make that lawful to himself, much less duty, which God has already made sin. "Well, " (says God,) "you will accomplish, you
CHAP. XLV.

The prophecy we have in this chapter concerns Baruch only, yet is intended for the support and encouragement of all the Lord's people that serve him faithfully, and keep close to him in difficult, trying times. It is placed here after the dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews, but was delivered long before, in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, as was the prophecy in the next chapter, and, probably, those that follow.

1. The word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of Nebiah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, 2. Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch; 3. Thou didst say, Wo is me now! for the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest. 4. Thus shalt thou say unto him, The Lord saith thus; Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land. 5. And seest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord; but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.

How Baruch was employed in writing Jeremiah's prophecies, and reading them, we had an account, ch. xxxvi. and how he was threatened for it by the king, warrants being out for him, and he forced to absent, and how narrowly he escaped under a divine protection, to which story this chapter should have been subjoined, but the having reference to a private person, it is here thrown into the latter end of the book, as St. Paul's epistle to Philemon is put after his other epistles. Observe, 1. The consternation that poor Baruch was in when he was sought for by the king's messengers, and obliged to hide his head, and the notice which God took of it. He cried out, Wo is me now! v. 3. He was a young man, and so put in the world, he was well-affect ed to the things of God, and was willing to serve God and his prophet: but when it came to suffering, he was desirous to be excused, being an ingenious man, and a scholar, he stood fair for preferment, and now to be driven into a corner, and in danger of a prison, or worse, was a great disappointment to him. When he read the roll publicly, he hoped to gain reputation by it, that it would have made him to be taken notice of and employed, but when he found that, instead of that, it exposed
him to contempt, and brought him into disgrace, he cried out, "I am undone, I shall fall into the pursuers' hands, and be imprisoned, and put to death, or banished; the Lord has added grief to my sorrow, has loaded me with one trouble after another; afraid of writing and reading the prophecies of my country's ruin, I have the sorrow of being treated as a criminal for so doing; and though another might make nothing of this, yet, for my part, I cannot hear it, it is a burden too heavy for me; I faint in my sighing, or, I faint with my sighing; it just kills me, and I find no rest, no satisfaction in my own mind. I cannot compose myself as I should and would to bear it; nor have I any prophecies of relieving or comfort." Baruch was a good man, but, we must say, this was his infirmity. Note, 1. Young beginners in religion, like fresh-water sailors, are apt to be discouraged with the little difficulties which they commonly meet with at first in the service of God. They do but run with the flock, and it weary them; they faint upon the very dawning of the day of adversity, and it is an evidence that their strength is small, (Prov. xxiv. 16.) that their faith is weak, and that they are yet but babes, who cry for every hurt and every fright. 2. Some of the best and dearest of God's saints and servants, when they have seen storms rising, have been in frights, and apt to make the worst of things, and to disquiet themselves with melancholy apprehensions, much more, if God's providence concerning them or their friends is not near; if God takes notice of the frets and discontent of the people, and is displeased with them. Baruch should have rejoiced that he was counted worthy to suffer in such a good cause, and with such good company, but, instead of that, he is vexed at it, and blames his lot, and, reflects upon his God, as if he had dealt hardly with him; what he said was spoken in a heat and passion, and God was offended with him, and we should say dear for it, when his spirit being provoked, he spake unadvisedly with his lips. Thou didst say so and so, and it was not well said; God keeps account of what we say, even when we speak in haste.

2. The reproof that God gave him for talking at this rate. Jeremiah was troubled to see him in such an agitation, and knew not well what to say to him; he was at first transported, but, after, he calmed him and comforted him; he bade him rest, he served it; was willing to comfort him, and yet knew not which was to go about it; but God tells him what, and he shall say to him, v. 4. Jeremiah could not be certain what was at the bottom of these complaints and fears, but God sees it; they came from his corruptions; that the hurt therefore might not be healed slightly, he searches the wound, and shows him that he had raised his expectation too high in this world, and had promised himself too much from it, and that made the distress and trouble he was in very grievous to him, and so hard to be borne. Note, The frowns of the world would not disquiet us as they do, if we did foolishly flatter ourselves with the hopes of its smiles, and court and covet them too much. It is our over-fondness for the good things of the world, that makes us over-sorrowful about its evil things. Now God shows him that it was his fault and folly, at this time of day especially, either to desire, or to look for, an abundance of the wealth and honour of this world. For, (1.) The ship was sinking; ruin was coming upon the Jewish nation, an utter and universal ruin, "That which I have built, to be a house for myself, I am breaking down, and that which I have plaited, to be a pavilion for myself, I am plucking up, even this whole land, the Jewish church and state; and dost thou now seek great things for thyself? Dest thou expect to be rich and honourable, and to make a figure now? No." (2.) It is absent for thee to be now painting thine own cabin. Canst thou expect to be high, when all are brought low, to be full when all about thee are empty? To seek ourselves more than the public welfare, especially to seek great things to ourselves, when the public is in danger, is very unbecoming Israelites. We may apply it to this world, and to our day. God's worthies, by their present condition, is breaking down and pulling up, every thing is uncertain and perishing, we cannot expect any continuing city here. What folly is it then to seek great things for ourselves here, where every thing is little, and nothing certain!

3. The encouragement that God gave him to hope that though he should not be great, yet he should be safe. "I will bring evil upon all flesh, all nations of men, all orders and degrees of men, but thy life will I give to thee for a prey, (thou soul, so the word is,) in all places whithers thou goest. Thou must expect to be hurried from place to place, and, wherever thou goest, to be in danger, but thou shalt escape, though often very narrowly, shall have thy life; but it shall be as a prey, which is get with much difficulty and danger; thou shalt be saved as by fire." Note, The preservation and continuance of life are very great mercies, and we are bound to account them such, as they are the prolonging of our opportunity to glorify God in this world, and to get ready for a better; and at some times, especially when the arrows of death fly thick about us, they are a signal favour, and what we ought to be thankful for, and, while we hope for further preservation, we need not complain, though we be disappointed of the great things we expected. Is not the life more than meat?

CHAP. XLVI.

How judgment began at the house of God. We have found in the foregoing prophecy and history; but now we shall find that it did not end there; in this and the following chapters. 1. First, We, which have most reason to expect calamities from the neighbouring nations, and those brought upon them too mostly by the king of Babylon, till at length Babylon itself comes to be reckoned with. The prophecy against Egypt is begun first, and takes up this whole chapter; in which we have, 1. A prophecy of the desecrations of Pharaoh-Necho by the Chaldean forces at Carmel, which was accomplished soon after, in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, v. 1. 2. A prophecy of the desecration which Nebuchadrezzar should make upon the land of Egypt, and his success in it, which was accomplished some years after the destruction of Jerusalem, v. 13. 26. III. A prophecy of the terrible overthrow of the Israel of God in the midst of these calamities, v. 27. 28.

1. THE word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Gentiles; 2. Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh-Necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carmel, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah. 3. Order ye the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle. 4. Harness the horses; and get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth with your helmets; furnish the spears, and put on the brigandines. 5. Wherefore have I seen them dismayed and turned away back? and their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled apace, and look not back: for fear was round about, saith the Lord. 6. Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; they shall stumble, and fall toward the north by the river Euphrates. 7. Who is that which couched up as a flood, whose ways,
Egypt now riseth up like a flood, sweeping to keep within its own banks, and threatening to overflow all the neighbouring lands; it is a very formidable army that the Egyptians bring into the field upon this occasion: the prophet summons them, (v. 9.) 

**Come up, ye horses; rage, ye chariots; he challenges them to bring all their confederate troops together, the Ethiopians and the Libyans, that handle the shield; and the Lydians, that handle and bend the bow.** 10. *For this is the day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood; for the Lord God of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.*

11. *Go up into Gilead and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines; for thou shalt not be cured.* 12. *The nations have heard of thy shame, and thy cry hath filled the land: for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty, and they are fallen both together.*

The first verse is the title of that part of this book which relates to the neighbouring nations, and follows here. **It is the word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah against the Gentiles; for God is King and Judge of nations, knows them, and will call them to an account, who know him not, nor take any notice of him. Both Isaiah and Ezekiel prophesied against these nations that Jeremiah here has a several saying to, and with reference to the same events. In the Old Testament we have the word of the Lord against the Gentiles, in the New Testament we have the word of the Lord for the Gentiles, that they who were afar off are made nigh.**

He begins with Egypt, because they were of old Israel's oppressors, and of late their deceivers, when they were the object of his complaint. It foretells the overthrow of the army of Pharaoh-necho, by Nebuchadnezzar, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, which was so complete a victory to the king of Babylon, that thereby he recovered from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates, all that pertained to the king of Egypt, and so weakened him that he came not again any more out of his land, (as we find, 2 Kings, xxiv. 7.) and so made him pay dear for his expedition against the king of Assyria four years before, in which he slew Josiah, 2 Kings xxii. 29. This is the event that is here foretold in lofty expressions of triumph over Egypt thus foiled; which Jeremiah would speak of with a particular pleasure, because the death of Josiah, which he had lamented, was now avenged on Pharaoh-necho. Now here—

1. The Egyptians are upbraided with the mighty preparations they made for this expedition, in which the prophet calls to them to do their utmost, for so they would; *Come then, order the buckler, let the weapons of war be got ready,* (v. 3.) *Egypt was famous for horses, let them be harnessed, and the cavalry well mounted; Get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth, etc. v. 4.* See what preparations the children of men make, with abundance of care and trouble, and at a vast expense, to kill one another, as if they did not die fast enough of themselves! He compares their marching out upon this expedition to the rising of their river Nile; (v. 7, 8)
13. The word that the Lord spake to Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon should come and smite the land of Egypt. 14. Declare ye in Egypt, and publish in Migdol, and publish in Noph, and in Tahapanes: say ye, Stand fast, and prepare thee; for the sword shall devour round about thee. 15. Why are thy valiant men swept away? they stood not, because the Lord did drive them. 16. He made many to fall, yea, one fell upon another; and they said, Arise, and let us go again to our own people, and to the land of our nativity, from the oppressing sword. 17. They did cry there, Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise; he hath passed the time appointed. 18. As I live, saith the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts, Surely as Tabor is among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea, so shall he come. 19. O thou daughter dwelling in Egypt, furnish thyself to go into captivity: for Noph shall be waste and desolate without an inhabitant. 20. Egypt is like a very fair heifer, but destruction cometh; it cometh out of the north. 21. Also her hired men are in the midst of her like fatted bullocks; for they also are turned back, and are fled away together: they did not stand, because the day of their calamity was come upon them, and the time of their visitation. 22. The voice thereof shall go like a serpent; for they shall march with an army, and come against her with axes, as hewers of wood. 23. They shall cut down her forest, saith the Lord, though it cannot be searched; because they are more than the grasshoppers, and are innumerable. 24. The daughter of Egypt shall be confounded; she shall be delivered into the hand of the people of the north. 25. The Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saith, Behold, I will punish the multitude of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with their gods, and their kings; even Pharaoh, and all them that trust in him: 26. And I will deliver them into the hand of those that seek their lives, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants: and afterwards it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old, saith the Lord. 27. But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid. 28. Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord; for I am with thee: for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee; but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure: yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.

In these verses, we have:

1. Confusion and terror spoken to Egypt. The accomplishment of the prediction in the former part of the chapter disabled the Egyptians to make any attempts upon other nations; for what could they do when their army was routed? But still they remained strong at home, and none of their neighbours durst make any attempts upon them. Though the kings of Egypt came no more out of their land, (2 Kings xxiv. 7.) yet they kept safe and easy in their land; and what would they desire more, than peaceably to enjoy their own? One would think all men should be content to do this, and not covet to invade their neighbours. But the measure of Egypt's iniquity is full, and now they shall not long enjoy their own; they that encroach on others shall now be themselves encroached on. The scope of the prophecy here is to show how the coming of Nebuchadrezzar would make the Egyptians secure out of the land of Egypt, and bring the war into their own bosoms, which they had formerly carried into his borders, v. 15. This was fulfilled by the same hand with the former, even Nebuchadrezzar's, but many years after, twenty at least, and, probably, the prediction of it was long after the former prediction, and perhaps much about the same time with that other prediction of the same event which we have, ch. xxiv. 1-28.

2. This is the alarm of war sounded in Egypt, to their great amazement, (v. 14.) notice given to the country that the enemy is approaching, the sword is devouring round about in the neighbouring countries, and therefore it is time for the Egyptians to put themselves in a posture of defence, to prepare for war, that they may give the enemy a warm reception. This must be proclaimed in all parts of Egypt, particularly in Migdol, Noph, and Tahapanes, because in these places especially the Jewish refugees, or fugitives rather, had planted themselves, in contempt of God's command; (ch. xlv. 1.) and let them hear what a sorry shelter Egypt is likely to be to them.

2. The retreat, hereupon, of the forces of other nations which the Egyptians had in their pay, is here foretold. Some considerable number of those troops, it is probable, were posted upon the frontiers
will be done in a little time. Egypt is very populous, full of towns and cities, like a forest, the trees of which cannot be searched or numbered, and very rich, full of hid treasures, many of which will escape the searching eye of the Chaldean soldiers; but they are too much in the country, for they are more than the locusts, that can be both destroyed, and overrun a country, devouring every green thing; (Joel i. 6, 7,) so shall the Chaldeans do, for they are innumerable. Note, The Lord of hosts hath numberless hosts at his command.

4. The desolation of Egypt hereby is foretold, and the waste that should be made of that rich country. Egypt is like a very fair heifer, or calf, (v. 24.) and shining it, but as it is devoured, so she is subjection; wanton as a heifer that is well fed, and very sportful. Some think here is an allusion to Apis, the bull or calf which the Egyptians worshipped, from whom the children of Israel learned to worship the golden calf. Egypt is as fair as a goddess, and adores herself, but destruction comes; cutting up comes, so some read it; it comes out of the north; whence the Chaldean soldiers shall come, as so many butchers or sacrificers, to kill and cut up this fair heifer. (1.) The Egyptians shall be brought down, shall be tamed, and their tune changed. The daughters of Egypt shall be confounded, (v. 24.) shall be filled with astonishment; their voice shall go like a serpent, it shall be very low and submissive, they shall not low like a fair heifer, that makes great noise and no little out of all its parts. They shall not dare to make loud complaints of the cruelty of the conquerors, but vent their griefs in silent murmurs. They shall not now, as they used to do, answer roughly, but, with the poor, use in-treaties, and beg for their lives. (2.) They shall be carried away prisoners into their enemy’s land; (v. 19.) “O thou daughter, dwelling securely and delicately in Egypt, that fruitful, pleasant country, do not think this will last always, but, for thyself, go to into captivity; instead of rich clothes, which will but tempt the enemy to strip thee, get plain and warm clothes; instead of fine shoes, provide strong ones; and inure thyself to hardship, that thou mayest bear it the better.” Note, It concerns us, among all our preparations, to prepare for trouble; we provide for the entertainment of our friends, but not for the oppression of our enemies, whether of our enemies, nor among all our furniture omit furniture for captivity. The Egyptians must prepare to flee, for their cities shall be evacuated; Noph particularly shall be desolate without an inhabitant, so general shall the slaughter and the captivity be. There are some penalties which we say, the king and the multitude are exempted from, but here even these are obvious; The multitude of No shall be punished; it is called populous No, Nah. iii. 8. Though hand join in hand, yet they shall not escape; nor can any think to go off in the crowd. Be they ever so many, they shall find God will be too many for them. Their kings and all their petty princes shall fall; and their gods too, (ch. XIII. 12, 13,) their idols and their great men. Those which they call their tutelar deities, shall have no protection to them. Pharaoh shall be brought down, and all those that trust in him; (v. 25,) particularly the Jews that came to sojourn in his country, trusting in him rather than in God. All these shall be delivered into the hands of the northern nations, (v. 24.) into the hand not only of Nebuchadnezzar, that mighty potentate, but into the hands of his servants, according to the curse on Ham's posterity, of which the Egyptians were, that they should be the servants of servants; these seek their lives, and into their hands they shall be delivered. 5. An intimation is given that in process of time Egypt shall recover itself again; (v. 26.) After-

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Because of the day that cometh to spoil all the Philistines, and to cut off from Tyrus and Zidon every helper that renameth; for the Lord will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the country of Caphir. 5. Baldness is come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is cut off with the remnant of their valley: how long wilt thou cut thyself? 6. O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still. 7. How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea-shore? there hath he appointed it.

As the Egyptians had often proved false friends, so the Philistines had always been sworn enemies, to the Israel of God, and the more dangerous and vocations for their being such near neighbours to them. They were considerably humbled in David's time, but, it seems, they had got head again, and were a considerable people till Nebuchadnezzar cut them off with their neighbours, which is the event here foretold. The design of this prophecy is observable. Before Pharaoh smote Gaza, when this blow was given to Gaza by the king of Egypt is not certain, whether in his expedition against Carchemish, or in his return thence, after he had slain Joash, or when he afterward came with design to relieve Jerusalem; but this is mentioned here, to show that this word of the Lord came to Jeremiah against the Philistines, when they were in their full strength and lustre, themselves and their country in prosperity, and in peril from any adversary or evil occurrent, when no disturbance of their repose was foreseen by any human probabilities; then Jeremiah foretold their ruin, which Pharaoh's smiting Gaza soon after would be but an earnest of, and, as it were, the beginnings of sorrow to that country. It is here foretold,

1. That a foreign enemy and a very formidable one shall be brought upon them: Waters rise up out of the north, v. 2. Waters sometimes signify multitudes of people and nations, (Rev. xvii. 15.) sometimes great and threatening calamities, (Ps. lxix. 1.) these here signify both. They rise out of the north, whence fair weather, and the wind that drives away rain, are said to come; but now a terrible storm comes out of that cold climate. The Chaldean army shall overflow the land like a huge. Probably, this happened before the destruction of Jerusalem, for it should seem that in Gedaliah's time, which was just after, the army of the Chaldeans was quite withdrawn out of those parts. The country of the Philistines was but of small extent, so that it would soon be overwhelmed by so vast an army.

2. That they shall all be in a consternation upon it. They shall have no heart to fight, but shall sit down and cry like children; all the inhabitants of the land shall howl, so that nothing but lamentation shall be heard in all places. The occasion of the fright is elegantly described, v. 3. Before it comes to killing and slaying, the very stamping of the horses and rattling of the chariots, when the enemy makes his approach upon them, it seems, to that degree, that parents in their fright shall seem void of natural affection, for they shall not look back to their children, to provide for their safety, or so much as to see what becomes of them. Their hands shall be so feeble, that they shall despair of carrying them off with them, and therefore they shall not care for seeing them, but leave them to take their lot; or they shall be in such
a consternation, that they shall quite forget even those pieces of themselves. Let none be over-fond of their children, nor dote upon them, since such distress may come, that they may either wish they had none, or forget that they have, and have no heart to look upon them.

3. That the cities of the Philistines shall be spoiled and laid waste, and the other countries adjoining to them and in alliance with them. It is a day to spoil the Philistines, for the Lord will spoil them, v. 4. Note, Those whom God will spoil must needs be spoiled; for, if God be against them, who can be for them? Tyre and Zidon were strong and wealthy cities, and they used to help the Philistines in distress, v. 5. But they shall not be involved in the common ruin, and God will cut off from them every helpe that remains. Note, Those that trust to help from creatures, will find it cut off when they most need it, and will thereby be put into the utmost confusion. Who the remnant of the country of Caphtor were, is uncertain, but we find that the Caphtorim were near akin to the Philistines (Gen. x. 14.) and, probably, when their own country was destroyed, such as remained came and settled with their Kinsmen the Philistines, and were now spoiled with them. Some particular places are here named, Gaza and Ashkelon; (v. 5.) baldness is come upon them, the invaders have stripped them of all their ornaments, or, they have made themselves bald in token of extreme grief; and they lacerate their faces with their teeth to show the marks of their grief and anguish in their faces.

4. That these calamities should continue long. The prophet, in the foresight of this, with his usual tenderness, asks them, first, (v. 5.) How long will ye cut yourselves, as men in extreme sorrow and anguish do? Oh how solemn will the calamity be, not only cutting, but long cutting; but he turns from the effect to the cause: They cut themselves, for the sword of the Lord cuts them. And therefore, (1.) He bespeaks that to be still; (v. 6.) O thou sword of the Lord, how long will ye be ere thou be quiet? He here would cut up itself into the scabbard, we shall devour no more flesh, drink no more blood. This expresses the prophet's earnest desire to see an end of the war, and to see, with compassion, as he came a man, even upon the Philistines themselves, when their country was made desolate by the sword.

Note, War is the sword of the Lord, with it he punishes the crimes of his enemies, and pleads the cause of his own people. When war is once begun, it often lasts long; the sword, once drawn, does not quickly find the way into the scabbard again: may some, when they draw the sword, throw away the scabbard, for they delight in war. So deplorable are the desolations of war, that the blessings of peace cannot but be very desirable. O that swords might be beaten into ploughshares! (2.) Yet he gives a satisfactory account of the continuance of the war, and stops the mouth of his own complaint; (v. 7.) How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given the sword against such and such places, particularly specified in his commission? There hath he appointed it. Note, [1.] The sword of war has its charge from the Lord of hosts; every bullet has its charge; you call them blind bullets, but they are directed by an all-seeing God; the war itself has its charge; he saith to it, Go, and it goes; Come, and it comes. [2.] This, and it does it, for he is Commanded in chief. [3.] When the sword is drawn, we cannot expect it should be sheathed till it has fulfilled its charge. As the word of God, so his rod and his sword shall accomplish that for which he sends them.
Lord, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles. 13. And Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel their confidence.

We may observe, in these verses,

1. The Author of Moab's destruction; it is the Lord of hosts, that has armies, all armies, at his command, and the God of Israel, (v. 1.) who will herein plead the cause of his Israel against a people that have always been vexatious to them, and will punish them now for the injuries done to Israel of old, and for those they now do with them; (Deut. ii. 9.) therefore the destruction of Moab is called the work of the Lord, (v. 10.) for it is he that pleads for Israel; and his work will exactly agree with his word, v. 8.

2. The instruments of it; Spoilers shall come, (v. 8.) shall come with a sword, a sword that shall pursue them, v. 2. I will send unto him wanderers, such as came from afar, as if they were vagrants, or had missed their way, but they shall cause him to wander; they seem as wanderers themselves, but they shall make the Moabites to be really wanderers, some to flee, and others to be carried into captivity. These destroyers stir up themselves to do execution; they have devised evil against Heshbon, one of the principal cities of Moab, and they aim at no less than the ruin of the kingdom, and let us cut it off from being a nation; (v. 2.) nothing less will serve the turn of the invaders, they come not to plunder it, but to ruin it. The prophet, in God's name, engages them to make thorough work of it; (v. 16.) Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, this bloody work, this destroying work; though it goes against the grain with men of compassion, yet it is the work of the Lord, and must not be done by the halves. The Chaldeans have it in charge, by a secret instinct, (says Mr. Gataker,) to destroy the Moabites, and therefore they must not spare, must not, out of foolish pity, keep back their sword from blood, they thereby bring a sword, and a curse with it, upon themselves, as Saul did by sparing the Amalekites; and Ahab by letting Benhadad go; Thy life shall go for Thy life, if thou be not willing to destroy that general rule given to all that are employed in any service for God. Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully or negligently, that pretends to do it, but does it not to purpose, makes it show of serving God's glory, but is really serving his own ends, and carries on the work of the Lord no further than will suit his own purposes; or that is slothful in business for God, and takes neither care nor pains to do it as it should be done, Mal. i. 14. Let not such deceive themselves, for God will not thus be mocked.

3. The woful instances and effects of this destruction. The cities shall be laid in ruins, they shall be spoiled, (v. 1.) and cut down, (v. 2.) they shall be desolate, (v. 9.) without any to dwell therein for his life; and the plain be destroyed, in, or no people to dwell in them, or no safety and ease to those that would dwell in them. Every city shall be spoiled, and no city shall escape. The strongest city shall not be able to secure itself against the enemies' power, nor shall the finest city be able to recommend itself to the enemies' pity and favour. The country also shall be wasted, the valley shall be filled, and the plains be destroyed; and, or, or no people to dwell in them, and of the sheep and the flocks, which used to cover the plains, and make the valley rejoice, shall all be destroyed, eaten up, trodden down, or carried off. The most sacred persons shall not escape, the priests and princes shall go together into captivity. Nay, Chemosh, the god they worship, who, they hope, will protect them, shall share with them in the ruin, his temples shall be laid in ashes, and his image carried away with the rest of the spoil. Now the consequence of this will be, (1.) General shame and confusion; Kirjathaim is confounded, and Moab is so. They shall be ashamed of the mighty boasts they have sometimes made of their cities. There shall be no more vaunting in Moab concerning Heshbon; (so it might be read, v. 2.) they shall no more boast of the strength of that city, when the evil which is designed against it is brought upon it. (2.) They shall be more exposed to the courts of their gods; (v. 13.) they shall be ashamed of Chemosh; and it shall be said, These are the prayers they made to, and all the confidence they put in, that dunghill deity: as Israel was ashamed of Beth-el, of the golden calf they had at Beth-el, which they confided in as their protector, but were deceived in, for it was not able to save them from the Assyrians: nor shall Chemosh be able to save the Moabites from the Chaldeans. (3.) They shall not be convinced and made ashamed of the folly of their idolatry by the word of God, shall be convinced and made ashamed of it by the judgments of God, when they shall find by woful experience the utter inutility of the gods they have served to do them any service. (2.) There will be great sorrow; there is a voice of crying heard, (v. 3.) and the cry is nothing but spoiling and uprooting and great destruction; Aha! alas! Moab is destroyed, v. 4. The great ones having quitted the cities to shift for their own safety, even the little ones have caused a cry to be heard, the meaner sort of people, or the little children, the innocent, harmless ones, whose cries at such a time are the most piteous. Go up to the hills, go down to the valley, and you meet with continual weeping, weeping, with weeping all are in tears, you meet none with dry eyes. Even the enemies have heard the cry of them from whom it had been policy to conceal it, for they will be animated and encouraged by it; but it is so great, that it cannot be hid. (3.) There will be great hurry; they will cry to one another, Away, away, flee, save your lives, (v. 6.) shift for your own safety with all imaginable speed, though you escape as bare and naked as the beast, or gri, or dry bones; Ahab, in the words of the prophet, 'in the way of the eagle, it is not he that carrieth any thing you have, for it may cost you your life to attempt it, Matth. xxiv. 16. 18. Take shelter, though it be in a barren wilderness, that you may have your lives for a prey. The danger will come suddenly and swiftly; and therefore give wings unto Moab, (v. 9.) that would be the greatest kindness you could do them, that is it that they will call for, What we have wings like a dove? for unless they have wings, and can fly, there will be no escaping. 4. The sins for which God will now reckon with Moab, and which justify God in these severe proceedings against them.

(1.) It is because they have been secure, and have trusted in their wealth and strength, in their works, and in their treasures, v. 7. They had taken a great deal of time in laying plots against Israel, carrying on large works about them, and to fill their exchequer and private coffers; so that they thought themselves in as good a posture for war as any people could be, and that none durst invade them, and therefore set danger at defiance; they trusted in the abundance of their riches, and strengthened themselves in their wickedness, Ps. li. 7. Now, for this reason, that they may have a sensible conviction of their folly and their cruel confidences, God will send an enemy that shall muster their works, and ride
their treasures. Note, We forfeit the comfort of that creature, which we repose that confidence in that should be repose in God only. The reed will break that is leant upon.

(2. It is because they have not made a right improvement of the days of their peace and prosperity, ver. 11. They had been long undisturbed; Moab hath been at ease from his youth. It was an ancient kingdom before Israel was, and had enjoyed great tranquillity, though a small country, and sur-

9 rrounded with potent neighbours. God's Israel were afflicted from their youth, (Ps. cxix. 1, 2.) but Moab hath been at ease from his youth. He has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, has not known any troublesome, weakening changes, but is as wine kept on the lees, and not racked or drawn off, by which it retains its strength and body. He has been unrested, nor any way made uneasy; he has not gone into captivity, as Israel have often done, and yet Moab is a wicked, idolatrous nation, and one of the confederates against God's hidden ones, Ps. lxxxiii. 6. Note, There are many that persist in unequitable iniquity, and yet enjoy uninterrupted prosperity. (2.) They had been as long corrupt and unformed; He has settled on his lees, he has been secure and solid in his prosperity, has rested in it, and fetched all the strength and life of the soul from it, as the wine from the lees; his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed; he is still the same, as bad as ever he was. Note, While bad people are as happy as they used to be in the world, it is no marvel if they are as bad as they used to be.

They have no changes of their peace and prosperity, therefore they fear not God, their hearts and lives are unchanged, Ps. iv. 19.

14. How say ye, We are mighty and strong men for the war! 15. Moab is spoiled, and gone up out of her cities, and his chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter, saith the King, whose name is The Lord of hosts. 16. The calamity of Moab is near to come, and his affliction hasteth fast. 17. All ye that are about him, bemoan him; and all ye that know his name, say, How is the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod! 18. Thou daughter that dost inhabit Dibon, come down from thy glory, and sit in thist; for the spoiler of Moab shall come upon thee, and he shall destroy thy strong holds. 19. O inhabitant of Aror, stand by the way, and espie; ask him that fleeth, and her that escapeth, and say, What is done! 20. Moab is confounded; for it is broken down; howl and cry; tell ye it in Arnon, that Moab is spoiled. 21. And judgment is come upon the plain country; upon Holon, and upon Jahazah, and upon Me-phath. 22. And upon Dibon, and upon Nebo, and upon Beth-diblathaim, 23. And upon Kiria-thaim, and upon Beth-gamul, and upon Beth-meon. 24. And upon Ke-riot, and upon Bozrah, and upon all the cities of the land of Moab, far or near. 25. The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, saith the Lord. 26. Make ye him drunken; for he magnified himself against the Lord: Moab also shall wallow in his vomit, and he also shall be in derision. 27. For was not Israel a derision unto thee? was he found among thieves? for since thou spakest of him, thou skippedst for joy. 28. O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities, and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove that maketh her nest in the sides of the hole's mouth. 29. We have heard the pride of Moab, (he is exceeding proud,) his loftiness, and his arrogancy, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart. 30. I know his wrath, saith the Lord: but it shall not be so; his lies shall not so effect it. 31. Therefore will I howl for Moab, and I will cry out for all Moab; my heart shall mourn for the men of Kir-heres. 32. O vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee with the weeping of Jazer; thy plants are gone over the sea, they reach even to the sea of Jazer; the spoiler is fallen upon thy summer-fruits, and upon thy vintage. 33. And joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab; and I have caused wine to fail from the wine-presses: none shall tread with shouting; their shouting shall be no shouting. 34. From the cry of Heshbon even unto Elealeh, and even unto Jahaz, have they uttered their voice, from Zoar even unto Horonaim, as a heifer of three years old; for the waters also of Nimrim shall be desolate. 35. Moreover, I will cause to cease in Moab, saith the Lord, him that offereth in the high places, and him that burneth incense to his gods. 36. Therefore my heart shall sound for Moab like pipes, and my heart shall sound like pipes for the men of Kir-heres: because the riches that he hath gotten is perished. 37. For every head shall be bald, and every beard clipped: upon all the hands shall be cuttings, and upon the loins sackcloth. 38. There shall be lamentation generally upon all the house-tops of Moab, and in the streets thereof: for I have broken Moab like a vessel wherein is no pleasure, saith the Lord. 39. They shall howl, saying, How is it broken down! how hath Moab turned the back with shame! so shall Moab be a derision and a dismaying to all them about him. 40. For thus saith the Lord, Behold, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab. 41. Kerioth is taken, and the strong holds are surprised, and the mighty men's hearts in Moab at that day shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs. 42. And Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, because he hath magnified himself against the Lord. 43. Fear, and the pit, and the snare, shall
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He upon thee, O inhabitant of Moab, saith the Lord. 44. He that fleeth from the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that getteth up out of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for I will bring upon it, even upon Moab, the year of their visitation, saith the Lord. 45. They that fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon, because of the force: but a fire shall come forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon, and shall devour the corner of Moab, and the crown of the head of the tumultuous ones. 46. Wo unto thee, O Moab! the people of Chemosh perisheth: for thy sons are taken captives, and thy daughters captives. 47. Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the Lord. Thus far is the judgment of Moab.

The destruction is here further prophesied of very largely, and with a great copiousness and variety of expression, and very pathetically, and in moving language, designed not only to awaken them by a national repentance and reformation to prevent the trouble, or by a personal repentance and reformation to prepare for it, but to affect us with the calamitous state of human life, which is liable to such lamentable occurrences, and with God's anger and the terror of his judgments, when he comes forth to contend with a provoking people. In reading this long roll of threatenings, and meditating the terror of them, it will be of more use to us to keep this in our eye, and to get our hearts thereby possessed with a holy awe of God and of his wrath, than to inquire critically into all the lively figures and metaphors here, and with God's anger and the terror of his judgments, when he comes forth to contend with a provoking people. In reading this long roll of threatenings, and meditating the terror of them, it will be of more use to us to keep this in our eye, and to get our hearts thereby possessed with a holy awe of God and of his wrath, than to inquire critically into all the lively figures and metaphors here.

1. It is a surprising destruction, and very sudden, that is here threatened. They were very secure, thought themselves strong for war, and able to deal with the most powerful enemy; (v. 14.) and yet the calamity is near, and he is not able to keep it off, nor so much as to keep the enemy long in parley, for the affliction hastens fast, (v. 15.) and will soon come to a crisis. The enemy shall fly as an eagle, so swiftly, so strongly, shall he come. (v. 40.) and even flies upon his prey, and he shall spread his wings, the wings of his army, over Moab: he shall surround it, that none may escape. The strong holds of Moab are taken by surprise, (v. 41.) so that all their strength stood them in no stead: and this made the hearts even of their mighty men to fail, for they had not time to recollect the considerations that might have animated them. It requires a more ordinary degree of courage not to be afraid of sudden fear.

2. It is an utter destruction, and such as lays Moab all in ruins. Moab is spoiled, (v. 15.) quite spoiled, is confounded and broken down; (v. 20.) their cities are laid in ashes, or seized by the enemy, so that they are forced to quit them, v. 15. Divers cities are here named, upon which judgment is made, and the last conclusion is, with an exclamation. What occasion is there for him to mention more particulars, when it comes upon all the cities of Moab in general, far and near? v. 21.—24. Note, When iniquity is universal, we have reason to expect that calamity should be so too. The kingdom is deprived of its dignity and authority: The horn of Moab is cut off, the horn of its kingdom is cut off; and defensive: his arm is broken, that he can neither give a blow, nor save a blow, v. 25. Is the youth of the kingdom the strength and beauty of it? His chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter, v. 15. They went down to the battle, promising themselves that they should return victorious; but God told them that they went down to the slaughter; so sure are they to fall against whom God fights! In a word, Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, v. 22. Those that are enemies to God will see their destruction.

III. It is a lamentable destruction, it will be just matter of mourning, and will turn joy into heaviness.

1. The prophet that foretells it dees himself lament it, and mourns at the very foresight of it, from a principle of compassion to his fellow-creatures, and concern for human nature. The prophet will not himself how the Lord's judgments are to be carried for them; (v. 31.) he will weep for the vine of Sibmah, (v. 32.) his heart shall sound like fishes for Moab, v. 36. Though the destruction of Moab would prove him a true prophet, yet he could not think of it without trouble. The ruin of sinners is no pleasure to God, and therefore should be a pair to us; even those that give warning of it should lay it to heart. His tears, and many others in this chapter, are much the same with what Isaiah had used in his prophecies against Moab; (Isa. xv. 16.) for though there was a long distance of time between that prophecy and this, yet they were both dictated by one and the same Spirit; and it becomes God's prophets to speak the language of these that went before them. It is no plagiarism sometimes to make use of old expressions, provided it be with new affections and applications.

2. The Moabites themselves shall lament; it will be the greatest mortification and grief imaginable to them. Those that sat in glory, in the midst of wealth and mirth, and all manner of pleasure, shall sit in thistles, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water, no comfort, is, v. 18. It is time for them to sit in thistles, and mire themselves to hardship, when the spoiler is come, who will strip them of all, and empty them. The Moabites in the remote corners of the country, that are furthest from the danger, will be inquisitive how the matter goes, what news from the army, will ask every one that escapes, What is done? v. 19. And when they are told that all is gone, that the invader is the conqueror, they will howl and cry, in bitterness and anguish of spirit, (v. 20.) they will even howl, and weep, and cry out the desolations of their country, they will leave the cities that used to be full of mirth, and dwell in the rock, where they may have their fill of melancholy: they shall no more see singing birds, but mourning birds, like the dove, (v. 28.) the doves of the valleys. Ezek. vii. 16. Let those that give themselves up to mirth know that God can soon change their note. Their sorrow shall be so very extreme, that they shall make themselves bald, and cut themselves, (v. 37.) which were expressions of a desperate grief, such as tempted men to be even their own destroyers. Job, indeed, rent his mantle, and shaved his head, but he did not cut himself. When the flood of passion rises ever so high, wisdom and grace must set bounds to it, set banks to it, to restrain it from such barbarities. (Ps. lii. 38.) There shall be a general lamentation upon all the house-tops of Moab, where they worshipped their idols, to whom they shall in vain bewail themselves, and in all the streets, where they conversed with one another, for they shall be free in communicating their griefs and fears, and in propagating them; for they see all lost, I have broken Moab like a vessel; (v. 21.) no provision, work or defensive: they shall be regarded, and cannot be pieced again. That which Moab used to rejoice in, was, their pleasant fruits, and the abundance of their rich wines. The delights of sense were all
the matter of their joy. Take away these, destroy their gardens and vineyards, and you make all their mirth to cease, Hos. ii. 9, 11, 12. There is great weeping when their plants are transplanted, are gone over the sea, (v. 32.) are carried into other countries, to be planted there. The sparrow is fallen upon your roof, and spoils your wine-vats. and that it is the meek of Moab to reach even to Elealeh, v. 34. Take joy and gladness from the plentiful field, and you take it from the land of Moab, v. 35. If the wine fail from the wine-presses, that used to be trodden with acclamations of joy, all their gladness is cut off. Take away that shouting, and there shall be no shouting. Note. They who make the delights of this world the chief glory of life, conclude falsely, that these are things they may be easily deprived of in a little time, subject themselves to the tyranny of the greatest grief; whereas they who rejoice in God may do that even when the fig-tree doth not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine. These Moabites lost not only their wine, but their water too, even the waters of Nimrim shall be dry, (v. 34.) and therefore their grief grew exceeding great. Yet, it is not to be supposed, that all their lamentations were heard in all places like the howing of a heifer of three years old. The expressions here are borrowed from Is. xv. 5, 6.

3. All their neighbours are called to mourn with them, and to condole with them on their ruin; (v. 17.) All ye that are about him, bewail him. Let him now be brought up with solemnity and their children with sorrow, and be fled by the adjoining countries. Nay, let those at a distance, who do but know his name, and have heard of his reputation, take notice of his fall, and say, How is the strong staff broken, whose strength was the terror of its enemies, and the beautiful rod, whose beauty was the pride of its friends! Let the nations take notice of this, and receive instruction. Let none be lifted up with or proud for the common prosperity, and in it confide in their strength or beauty, for neither will be a security against the judgments of God.

4. It is a shameful destruction, and such as shall expose them to contempt; Moab is made drunk, (v. 26.) and he that is made drunk, is made vile, he shall wallow in his vomit, and become an odious spectacle, and shall justly be in derision. Let the Moabites be brought down with every dishonour, wrath, till they stagger and fall, and be brought to their 'wits' end, and make themselves ridiculous by the wildness not only of their passions but of their counsels. And again, (v. 38.) Moab shall be a derision and a dissembling to all about him; they shall laugh at the fall of the pomp and power he was so proud of. Note. They that are happy are preparing reproach and ignominy for themselves.

5. It is the destruction of that which is dear to them; not only of their summer-fruits, and their vintage, but of their wealth; (v. 36.) The riches that he has gotten are perished; though he thought he had laid them up very safe, and promised himself a long enjoyment of them, yet they are gone. Note. The money that is hoarded in the chest, is as liable to perishing as the summer-fruits that lie exposed in the open fields. Riches are shedding things and, like dust as they are, slip through our fingers then when we are in most care to hold them fast, and grip them hard. Yet this is not the worst; even those whose religion was false and foolish were fond of it above anything, and, such as it was, would not part with it; and therefore, though it was really a promise, yet to them it was a threatening. (v. 35.) That God will cause to cease him that offers in the high places, for the high places shall be destroyed, and the fields of offerings shall be laid waste, and the priests themselves, who burnt incense to their gods, shall be slain, or carried into captivity, v. 7.

Note. It is only the true religion, and the worship and service of the true God, that will stand us in stead in a day of trouble.

VI. It is a just and righteous destruction, and that which they have deserved, and brought upon themselves, by sin.

The which they had been most notoriously guilty of, and for which God now reckoned with them, was pride. It is mentioned six times, v. 29. We have all heard of the pride of Moab; his neighbours took notice of it, it has testified to his face, as Israel's did, he is exceeding proud, and grows worse and worse. Observe his loudness, his arrogancy, his pride, his haughtiness, the multiplying of words in vain, the same purport, intimates in how many instances he boasted of what pride it was both to God and man. It was charged upon them, Is. xvi. 6. but here it is expressed more largely than there. Since then, they had been under humbling providences, and yet were unhumbled; nay, they grew more arrogant and haughty, which plainly marked them for that utter destruction of which pride is the forerunner. Two instances are more spoken of the pride of Moab; (1.) He had conducted himself insolently toward God. He must be brought down with shame, (v. 26.) for he has magnified himself against the Lord; and again, (v. 42.) he shall be destroyed from being a people, for this very reason; the Moabites preferred Chemosh before Jehovah, and thought themselves independent of the God of Israel, whom they set at defiance. (2.) He had conducted himself unrightfully toward Israel, particularly in their late troubles; therefore Moab shall fall into the same troubles, into the same hands, and be a derision, for Israel was a derision to him, v. 26, 27. The generality of the Moabites, when they heard of the calamities and desolation of their neighbours the Jews, they instead of lamenting them, rejected in them as if they had been thieves taken in the act of robbery; as often as they spake of them, they skipped for joy. Many, in such a case, entertained in their minds a secret pleasure at the fall of those they had a dislike to, who yet have so much discretion as to conceal it, it is so invidious a thing; but the Moabites industriously proclaimed their joy, and avowed it in derision, as if they had to Israel, triumphing over every Israelite that met with them, laughing at him; which was as inhuman as it was impious, and an impudent affront both to man, whose nature they were of, and to God, whose name they were called by. Note. Those that deride others in distress will justly and certainly, sooner or later, come into distress themselves, and be had in derision. The Jews that are glad at calamities, especially the calamities of God's church, shall not long go unprofited.

2. Beside this, they had been guilty of malice against God's people, and treachery in their dealings with them, v. 30. They made a jest of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, and pretended, when they laughed at them, that it was but in sport, and to make themselves merry; but, says God, I know his wrath. I know it comes from the old enmity he has to the seed of Abraham, and the worshippers of the true God. I know he thinks these calamities of the Jewish nation will end in their utter extermination. He now tells the Chaldeans what had been the people the Jews are, and irritates them against them; but they shall not be so as he expects; his lies shall not so effect it. The nation, whose fall they triumph in, shall recover itself. Some read it, I know his rage. Is it not so? (Is he not very furious against the people of God?) And his lies I know also. Do they not do so? Do they not belie them? Note. All the fury and all the falsehood of
the church's enemies are perfectly known to God, whatsoever the pretences are with which they think to cover them. 33, xxxii. 28.

VII. It is a complicated destruction, and by one instance after another will at length be completed; for those that make their escape from one judgment, shall perish by another; Fear, and the pit, and the snare, shall be upon them, v. 43. There shall be fear to drive them into the pit, and a snare to hold them fast in it, when they are in it; so that they shall neither escape from the destruction, nor escape out of it. What was said of sinners in general, (Isa. xxix. 17.) that they who flee from the fear shall fall into the pit, and they who come up out of the pit, shall be taken in the snare, is here particularly foretold concerning the sinners of Moab, (v. 44.) for it is the year of their visitation, when God comes to reckon with them, and will be known by the judgments which he executes, for he is the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts; (v. 15.) he is not only the King, who has authority to give judgment, but he is the Lord of hosts, who is able to do what he has determined. The figurative expressions used, v. 44, are explained in one instance; (v. 43.) Those that fled out of the villages for fear of the enemy's forces, put themselves under the protection of the city of Sihon, supposed they stood safe, as now armies sometimes retire under the canopy of a fortified city, and it is their protection; but here they shall be disappointed, for when they flee out of the pit they fall into the snare; Heshbon, which they thought would have sheltered them, devours them, as Moses had foretold long since; (Num. xxxii. 28.) A fire is gone out of Heshbon, and a flame from the city of Sihon, and devours those that come from all the corners of Moab, and fastens upon the crown of the head of the tumultuous noisy ones, or of the revellers, or children of noise; not meant of the rude, clamorous multitude, but of the great men, who blister, and hect, and make a noise; the judgments of God shall light on them. Shall we hear the conclusion of this whole matter? We have it; (v. 46.) Be to thee, O Moab! then art undone; the people that worship Chemosh perish, and are gone; farewell Moab. The sons and daughters, the hopes of the next generation, are gone into captivity after the Jews, whose calamities they rejoice in.

VIII. Yet it is not a perpetual destruction. The chapter concludes with a short promise of their return out of captivity in the latter days. God, in grace, bringeth back the Ammonites, will restore their captivity, v. 47. Thus tenderly does God deal with Moabites, much more with his own people! Even with Moabites he will not contend for ever, nor be always wroth. When Israel returned Moab did; and perhaps the prophecy was intended chiefly for the encouragement of God's people, to hope for that salvation which even Moabites shall share in. We may remark that the Ammonites, when they speak of themselves refer it to the days of the Messiah; then the captivity of the Gentiles, under the yoke of sin and Satan, shall be brought back by divine grace, which shall make them free, free indeed. This prophecy concerning Moab is long, but here it ends, it ends comfortably, Thus far is the judgment of Moab.

CHAP. XLIX.

The cup of trembling still goes round, and the nations must all drink of it, according to the instructions given to Jeremiah, ch. xlv. 15. This chapter puts it into the hands of the Ammonites, O Edomites, v. 7. 22. III. Of the Syrians, v. 23. 27. IV. Of the Edomites, and the nations of Hazor, v. 28. 33. V. Of the Elamites, v. 34. 39. When Israel was scarcely saved, where shall all these appear?

1. CONCERNING the Ammonites, thus saith the Lord, Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir? why then doth their king inherit God, and his people dwell in his cities? 2. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burnt with fire: then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the Lord. 3. Howl, O Heshbon; for Ai is spoiled: cry, ye daughters of Rabbah, gird ye with sackcloth; lament, and run to and fro by the hedges: for their king shall go into captivity, and his priests and his princes together. 4. Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys, thy flowing valley, O backsliding daughter? that trusted in her treasures, saying, Who shall come unto me? 5. Behold, I will bring a fear upon thee, saith the Lord God of hosts, from all those that be about thee; and ye shall be driven out every man right forth; and none shall gather up him that wandereth. 6. And afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the Lord.

The Ammonites were next, both in kindred and neighbourhood, to the Moabites, and therefore are next set to the bar. Their country joined to that of the two tribes and a half, on the other side Jordan, and was but a bad neighbour; however, being a neighbour, they shall have a share in these circular predictions.

1. An action is here brought in, God's name against the Ammonites, for an illegal encroachment upon the rightful possessions of the tribe of Gad, that lay next them, v. 1. A writ of inquiry is brought to discover what title they had to those territories, which, upon the carrying away of the Gileadites by the king of Assyria, (2 Kings xxv. 29. 1 Chron. v. 26.) were left almost desolate, at least unguarded, and an easy prey to the next invader. What! Does it eschew all defectum sanguinis, to want of seed? Hath Israel no sons? Hath he no heir? Are there no Gadesites left, to whom the right of inheritance belongs? Or, if there were not, are there no Israelites, none left of Judah, that are nearer akin to them than you are? Why then do they possess their king, as if he were entitled to the forfeited estates, or Micaom, their idol, as if he had the right to incorporate it, as if it was theirs? Doth it eschew the defectum sanguinis, to want of seed? Thus they magnified themselves against their border, and boasted it was their own, Zeph. ii. 8. Note, Though among men might often prevail against right, yet that might shall be controlled by the Almighty, who sits in the throne, judging aright; and these will find themselves mistaken, who think every thing their own which they can lay their hands on, or which none yet appears to lay claim to. As there is justice owing to
owners, so also to their heirs, when they are dead, when it is a great sin to defraud, though they either know not their right, or know not how to come at it. This shall be reckoned for particularly, when injuries of this kind are done to God's people.

2. Judgment is here given against them for this violence.

(1.) Terr rs shall come upon them; God will come against them as with an heavy, even in Rab- bah, their capital city, and a very strong one, v. 2.

The Lord God of hosts, who has all armies at his command, will bring a far upon them from all that be about them, v. 5. Note, God has many ways to terrify those who have been a terror to his people.

(2.) Their cities shall be laid in ruins. Rablah, the mother-city, shall be desolate heat, and her daughters, the other cities that have a dependence upon her, and receive law from her as daughters, shall be burnt with fire; so that the inhabitants shall be forced to quit them, and they shall cry, and gird themselves with sackcloth, as having lost all they have, and not knowing whither to betake themselves.

(3.) Their country, which they were so proud of, shall be wasted, (v. 4.) Wherefore gloried thou in the valleys, and trusted in thy treasures, O backsliding daughter? They are charged with backsliding or turning away from God and his worship, for they were the posterity of righteous Lot. It is true, they had never been so in covenant with God as Israel was; yet all idolaters may be called backsliders, for the worship of the true God was prior to that of false gods. They were ungodly and refractory; so some read it: and when they had forsaken their God, they gloried in their valleys, particularly one that was called the flowing valley, because it flowed with all good things. These they had violently taken away from Israel, and gloried in it when they had done so. They gloried in the strength of their valleys, so surrounded with mountains, that they were inaccessible; gloried in the products of them, gloried in the treasures they got together out of them, saying, Who shall come unto me? While they bathed themselves in the pleasures of their country, they flattered themselves with a conceit that they should never be disturbed in the enjoyment of them. To-morrow shall be as this day; therefore they set God and his judgment at naught; they were proud, voluptuous, and secure; but wherefore dost thou do so? Note, Those who backslide and turn away from God have little reason either to take complacency, or to put confidence, in any worldly enjoyments whatsoever, Hos. ix. 1.

(4.) Their people, from the least to the greatest, shall be forced out of the country; some shall flee to seek for shelter, others shall be carried into captivity, so that their land shall be quite evacuated; Their king and his princes, nay, and Milcom, their god, and his priests, shall go into captivity, (v. 3.) and every man shall be driven out right forth, shall take the next way, and make the best of it in his flight, (v. 5.) forgetting the valleys, the flowing valleys, which now fall them. And, to complete their calamity; they are proud, voluptuous, and secure; but wherefore dost thou do so? Note, Those who backslide and turn away from God have little reason either to take complacency, or to put confidence, in any worldly enjoyments whatsoever, Hos. ix. 1.
for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? who is that shepherd that will stand before me? 20. Therefore hear the counsel of the Lord, that he hath taken against Edom; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out; surely he shall make their habitations desolate with them. 21. The earth is moved at the noise of their fall; at the cry, the noise thereof was heard in the Red Sea. 22. Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah: and at that day shall the heart of the mighty men of Edom be as the heart of a woman in labour.

The Edomites come next to receive their doom from God, by the mouth of Jeremiah; they also were old enemies to the Israel of God; but their day will come to be reckoned with, and it is now at hand, and is foretold, not only by warning them, but alarming them with the counsel of God, who will afflictions were very much aggravated by their triumphs over them, and joy in their calamity, Ps. cxxxxvii. 7. Many of the expressions used in this prophecy concerning Edom, are borrowed from the prophecy of Obadiah, which is concerning Edom; for all the prophets being inspired by one and the same Spirit, there must needs be a wonderful harmony and agreement in their predictions.

Now here it is foretold, 1. That the country of Edom should be all wasted, and made desolate; that the calamity of Esau should be brought upon him, the calamity he has deserved, and God has long designed him, for his old sins, v. 8. The time is at hand when God will visit him, and call him to an account, and then they shall flee from the sword, turn back from the battle, and dwell deep in some close caverns, where they shall hide themselves. All they have shall be carried off by the conqueror: whereas grape-gatherers will leave some gleanings, and even thieves know when they have enough, and will destroy no further, they that destroy them shall never be satisfied, (v. 9, 10.) they shall make Esau quite bare, shall strip the Edomites of all they have, shall find out ways and means to come at their most hidden places, and shall discover even the secret places, where they thought to secure their wealth, and rile them, so that they shall none of them save their wealth, no, nor save themselves or their children, that might be concealed in a little room; He shall not be able to hide himself, and his seed too is spoiled. His brethren the Moabites, and his neighbours the Philistines, when they come to their last strait, shall shelter with, are spoiled as well as he, and disabled to do him any service. And he is not, or, there is not he, there is none to him, none left him, that may say what follows, (v. 11.) Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive. When they are flying, or dying, there shall be none left, no relation, no friend, no, not so much as any parish-officer, to come up to them, when they leave behind. Esau is not, he is cut off and gone; nor is there any to say, Leave me thine orphans. If the master of a family be cut off, or forced away, it is some comfort if he have a friend to leave his family with, whom he can confide in; but they shall have none such, for they shall all be involved in the same calamity. The Chaldee makes these to be the words of God to his people, distinguishing them from the Edomites in this calamity; and they read it, "But you, O house of Israel, you shall not leave your orphans, I will secure them, and let your widows rest on my word. Whatever becomes of the widows and fatherless of the Edomites, I will take care of yours." Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to the children of God, when they are dying, that they may leave their surviving relations with God, may, in faith, commit them to him, and encourage them to trust in him; and through the same hand of God, in all other times, in the world for them, yet they may hope that he will preserve them alive, always provided that they trust in him. Let the Edomites, for their part, count upon no other than to be made a desolation, and a reproach, for the decree is gone forth, God hath sworn it by himself, (v. 15.) that their cities shall be wasted, nay, they shall be perpetual ruins, they shall be made mean and despised; they are made a mighty figure, but God will make them small among the heathen; and they that despised God's people shall themselves be despised among men; (v. 15. Obad. 2.) nay, they shall be made monstrous, and even a predigy. (v. 17.) Edom shall be such a desolation, that every one who goes by shall be astonished; nay, worse yet, they shall be made a terror, Edom shall be made like Sodom and Gomorrha, not to be remembered, not to bring the ruins of it, no man shall abide there, (v. 18.) such a frightful place shall it be made!

2. That the instruments of this destruction should be very resolute and formidable. They have their commission from God, he summons them into this service; (v. 14.) I have heard a rumour, or report, from the Lord, heard it by the prophet of Obadiah, he heard it by a whisper to himself, that an ambassador, or herald, or messenger, is sent to the Gentiles, who are to lay Edom waste, saying, Gather ye together, muster all the forces ye can, and come against her; for (v. 20.) this is the counsel that he hath taken against Edom: the matter is settled, the decree is gone forth, and there is no resisting it; God has determined that Edom shall be laid waste, and then he that is to be employed in it shall come swiftly and strongly. Nebuchadrezzar is he, of whom it is here foretold, (1.) That he shall come up like a lion, with fierceness and fury, like a lion enraged by the swelling of Jordan overflowing his banks, which forces him out of his covert by the water-side, into the higher grounds, v. 19. He shall come roaring, come to devour all that come in his way. He shall come against Edom in the direction of the strong places and fortresses, and I will cause him to come suddenly into the land, (so the next words might well be read,) so as to find them unprovided with necessities for a defence; for I will look out a chosen man to appoint over her, to do this execution, a man fit for the purpose, one chosen out of the people: for when God his work do, he will find out the fittest instruments to be employed in it. He shall be a strong sting, stinging and spiritng for them the work? And who, will appoint me the time? Who will challenge me, and fix a time and place to meet me? Who will join issue with me in battle? And when I send a lion into the flock, Who is that shepherd, that can, or dare, stand before me, or against me, to oppose that lion, and live to think of any of the flock? Note, When God his work do, the instruments of it will find those that are able to engage in it; and all the world cannot find those that are able to engage against it. Nay, if God will have Edom destroyed, and their people dislodged, there needs not a lion, a fierce lion, to do it; even the least of the flock shall draw them out; (v. 20.) the meanest servant in Nebuchadrezzar's retinue, the weakest of all that follow his camp, shall draw them out for the slaughter, shall force them to flee, or to surrender, and make their habita-
tions devolate with them. God can bring to pass the greatest works by instruments least likely. When the Chaldean army comes against the Edomites, all hands shall be put to the sword and the greatest soldier in it shall have a pluck at them. (2.) Nebuchadnezzar shall come, not only like a lion, the king of beasts, but like an eagle, the king of birds, v. 22. He shall fly as the eagle upon his prey, so swiftly, so strongly; shall clap his wings upon Bozrah, to secure it for himself, (as before, ch. xlviii. 40.) and immediately the hearts of the mighty men shall fail them; and they shall see, he is an enemy that it is in vain to struggle with. 3. That the Edomites' confidences should all fail them in the day of their distress. (1.) They trusted to their wisdom, but that shall stand them no stead; this is the first thing fastened upon in this prophecy against Edom, v. 7. That nation used to be famous for wisdom, and their statesmen were thought to excel in politics; and yet now they shall take such wrong measures in all their councils, and be so baffled in all their designs, that people shall ask, with wonder, What is the matter with the Edomites? Is wisdom no more in Teman? Are the wise men of the east country (as Kings iv. 30.) become fools? Are those at their wits' end, that were thought to have the monopoly of prudence? Is counsel therefore no understanding men? It is so, when God is designing the ruin of a people; for whom he will destroy he infatuates. See Job xli. 20. Is their wisdom vanished? Is it tired? So some; Is it worn out? So others; Is it become useless? So others. Yes, it will do them no service when God comes forth to contend with them. (2.) They trusted to their strength, but neither shall that avail them; v. 18. They had been a terror to all their neighbours, every body feared them, and trucked to them, and this made them proud and conceited of themselves, and their own strength, and very secure; because no neighbouring nation durst meddle with them, they thought no nation in the world durst. Their country was much of it mountainous, having many passes which they thought themselves able to make good against any invader; but this terribleness of theirs deceived them, and so did their imaginary inaccessibility; they did not prove so strong as they were formidable, nor so safe as they were secure. High as they are, God will bring them down; for as there is no wisdom, so there is no might, against the Lord. See these expressions, Obad. 3, 4, 8. Their destruction should be inevitable, and very remarkable. (1.) God hath determined it; (v. 12.) he hath said it; nay, (v. 13.) he hath sworn it, that the Edomites shall not go unpunished, but they shall drink the cup of trembling, which is put into the hands of all their neighbours; even they, whose judgment, or doom, was not to drink of the cup, who had not so well deserved it as they had, must drink, and this for all time, under the name of Israel as they had been; or, Israel itself, that was God's peculiar people, and among whom there were many, very many, who kept his ordinances, upon which account they might have expected an exemption, and yet they had been made to drink of the bitter cup; and shall the Edomites think to pass it? No; they shall surely drink of it. Note, We see, 1. God doth not appoint the times of his visits, and do not think to pass the charge of the more guilty to promise themselves impunity; and when judgment begins at God's house, it will reach the strangers. (2.) All the world shall take notice of it; (v. 21.) The earth is moved, and all the nations put into a concern, at the noise of their fall; the news of it shall make them tremble. The noise of the outcry is heard at the Red sea, which flowed upon the coasts of Edom. So loud shall be the shouts of the conquerors, and the shrieks of the conquered, and such a mighty noise shall the news of this destruction of Idumea make in the nation, that it shall be heard among the ships that lie in the Red sea to the remotest shore, (as Kings iv. 26.) and then they shall carry the news of it to the remotest shore. Note, The fall of these who have affected to make a noise with their pomp and power, will make so much the greater noise.

23. Concerning Damascus. Hamath is confounded, and Arpad; for they have heard evil tidings; they are faint-hearted; there is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet. Damascus is waxed feeble, and turned herself to flee, and fear hath seized on her; anguish and sorrows have taken her, as a woman in travail. 25. How is the city of praise not left, the city of my joy! 26. Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets, and all the men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the Lord of hosts. 27. And I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall consume the palaces of Ben-hadad.

The kingdom of Syria lay north of Cannaan, as that of Edom lay south, and thither we must now remove, and take a view of the approaching fate of that kingdom, which had been often vexatious to the Israel of God. Damascus was the metropolis of that kingdom, and the ruin of the whole is supposed in the ruin of that; yet Hamath and Arpad, two other considerable cities, are named, (v. 23.) and the palaces of Ben-hadad, which he built, are particularly marked for ruin; (v. 27.) see also Amos i. 4. Some think Ben-hadad (the sea of Hadad, either their idol, or one of their ancient kings, whence the rest descended,) was a common name of the kings of Syria, as Pharaoh of the kings of Egypt. Now observe concerning the judgments of Damascus,

1. It begins with a terrible fright and faint-heartedness. They hear evil tidings, that the king of Babylon, with all his force, is coming against them, and they are confounded, they know not what measures to take for their own safety, their souls are melted, they are faint-hearted, they have no spirit left them, they are like the troubled sea, that cannot be quiet, (Isa. lvii. 20.) or like men in a storm at sea; (Ps. cvii. 26.) or, the sorrow that begins in the city shall go to the sea-coast, v. 23. See how easily God can dispirit those nations that have been most celebrated for valour! Damascus now waxeth fertile; (v. 24.) a city that thought she could have looked the most formidable enemy in the face, now turns herself to flee; among them, it is too much to suppose she should think of contending with her fate, than for a woman in labour to contend with her pains, which she cannot escape, but must yield to. It was a city of praise, (v. 25.) not praise to God, but to herself; a city much commended and admired by all strangers that visited it. It was a city of joy, where there was an affluence and confluence of all the delights of the world, and the enjoyment of them. We read it, (though there is no necessity for it,) the city of my joy, which the prophet himself had sometimes visited with pleasure. Or, it may be the speech of the king lamenting the ruin of the city of his joy. But now it is all overwhelmed with fear and grief. Note, These deceive themselves who place their happiness in carnal joys; for God in his providence can soon cast a damp upon them, and put an end to them. He
can soon make a city of praise to be a reproach, and a city of joy to be a terror to itself.

2. It ends with a terrible fall and fire. (1.) The inhabitants are slain; (v. 26.) The young men, who should fight the enemy, and defend the city, shall fall by the sword in her streets; and all the men of war, might, and courage, and strength, that were in the midst of the country, shall be cut off. (2.) The city is laid in ashes; (v. 27.) The fire is kindled by the besiegers in the wall, but it shall devour all before it, the palaces of Ben-hadad particularly, where so much mischief had formerly been hatched against God's Israel, for which it is now thus visited.

23. Concerning Kedar, and concerning the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon shall smite, thus saith the Lord; Arise ye, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east. 29. Their tents and their flocks shall they take away; they shall take to themselves their curtains, and all their vessels, and their camels; and they shall cry unto them. Fear is on every side.

30. Flee, get you far off, dwell deep, O ye inhabitants of Hazor, saith the Lord; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath taken counsel against you, and hath conceived a purpose against you. 31. Arise, get you up unto the wealthy nation, that dwelleth without care, saith the Lord, which have neither gates nor bars, which dwell alone.

32. And their camels shall be a booty, and the multitude of their cattle a spoile; and I will scatter into all winds them that are in the utmost corners; and I will bring their calamity from all sides thereof, saith the Lord. 33. And Hazor shall be a dwelling for dragons, and a desolation for ever; there shall no man abide there, nor any son of man dwell in it.

These verses foretell the desolation that Nebuchadrezzar and his forces should make among the people of Kedar, (who descended from Kedar the son of Ishmael, and inhabited a part of Arabia the Stony,) and of the kingdoms, the petty principalities of Hazor, that joined to them, who, perhaps, were originally Canaanites, of the kingdom of Hazor, in the north of Canaan, which had labin for its king, but, being driven thence, settled in the deserts of Arabia, and associated themselves with the Kedarines. Concerning this people, we may here observe,

1. What was their present state and posture. They dwelt in tents, and had no walls, but curtains, (v. 29.) no fortified cities; they had no gates, and no treasures, but stock upon land, no money, but flocks and camels. They had no soldiers among them, for they were in no fear of invaders; no merchants, for they dwelt alone, v. 31. Those of other nations neither came among them, nor traded with them; but they lived within themselves, content with the produce and pleasures of their own country. This was the manner of living, very different from that of the nations that were round about them. And, (1.) They were very rich; though they had no trade, no treasures, yet they were here said to be a wealthy nation, (v. 31.) because they had a sufficiency to answer all the occasions of human life, and they were content with it. Note, Those are truly rich who have enough to supply their necessities, and know when they have enough. We need not go to the treasures of kings and provinces, or to the cash of merchants, to look for wealthy people, they being few and far between. (2.) They were very easy, they dwelt without care, their wealth was such as nobody envied them, or, if any did, they might come peaceably, and enjoy the like, and therefore they fear nobody. Note, Those that live innocently and honestly may live very securely, though they have neither gates nor bars.

2. The design of the king of Babylon against them, and against their settlements. He shall take counsel against you, and has conceived a purpose against you, v. 30. That prudent man resolves it shall never be said, that he, who had conquered so many strong cities, will leave those unconquered.

3. The design of the king of Babylon is to make a difference between those unrighteous men, and the righteous, who are so little concerned about their own interest, as to allow their children to be destroyed in the time of national calamity, and their religion to be despised by the nations round about them. He shall not be able to say that they have done no wrong; but have given offence will not be a defence against such men as Nebuchadrezzar. Yet, how unrighteous soever he was in doing it, God was righteous in directing it. These people had lived insensitively among their neighbours, as many do, who yet, like them, are guilty before God; and it was just to punish them for their folly. Moreover, that God said, (v. 28.) Arise, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east. They will do it to gratify their own covetousness and ambition, but God orders it for the correcting of an unthankful people, and for warning to a careless world, to expect trouble when they seem to be most safe. God says to the Chaldeans, (v. 31.) "Arise, get up to the wealthy nation that dwelleth without; and go, and bring them in alarm, that none may imagine their mountain stands so strong, that it cannot be removed."
in the wind of trouble may blow; but if God compass us with his favour, we are safe, and may be easy, which way soever the storm comes. Fear shall drive them into other countries; they shall be dismayed before their enemies; but, as if that were not enough, I will send the sword after them, v. 37. Note, God can make his judgments follow those that think by flight to escape them, and to get out of the reach of them, Evil pursues sinners.

3. Their princes shall be destroyed, and the government quite changed; (v. 38.) I will set my throne in Elam. The throne of Nebuchadnezzar shall be set there, or the throne of Cyrus, who began his conquests with Elamis. Or, it may be, upon the destruction of those princes, Elam shall have a new king, he will make them know that he reigns, that his judges in the earth, and that kings and princes are accountable to him, and that high as they are he is above them. The king of Elam was famous of old, Gen. xiv. 1. Cchederion was king of Elam, and a mighty man he was in his day; the nations about him served him; his successes, we may suppose, made a great figure; but the king of Elam is no more to God than another man. Without his king’s throne in Elam, he will destroy from thence the king and the princes that are, and set up whom he pleases.

4. Yet the destruction of Elam shall not be perpetual; (v. 39.) In the latter days I will bring again the captivity of Elam. When Cyrus had destroyed Babylon, he brought in the exiles into the hands of the Persians, the Elamites, no doubt, returned in triumph out of all the countries whither they were scattered, and settled again in their own country. But this promise was to have its full and principal accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when we find Elamites particularly among those, who, when the Holy Ghost was given, heard spoken in their own tongue the wonderful works of God. (Acts ii. 9.) and that is the most desirable return of the captivity. If the Son makes you free, then you shall be free indeed.

CHAP. L.

In this chapter, and that which follows, we have the judgment of Babylon, which is put last of Jeremiah’s prophecies against the Gentiles, because it was last fulfilled; and when the cup of God’s fury went round, (ch. xxx. 17.) the king of Sheshach, Babylon, drank last. Babylon was employed as the rod in God’s hand for the chastising of the rest of the Gentiles; other nations, he foresaw, that rod shall be thrown into the fire. The destruction of Babylon by Cyrus was foretold, long before it came to its height, by Isaiah, and now again, when it is come to its height, it is repeated. The prophet here saw that kingdom flourishing like a green bay-tree yet at the same time he foresaw it withered and cut down. And as Isaiah’s prophecies of the destruction of Babylon, and the deliverance of Israel out of it, seem designed to typify the evangelical triumphs of all believers over the powers of darkness, and the great salvation wrought out by our Lord Jesus Christ; so Jeremiah’s prophecies of the same subject, and the same destruction, with the apocalyptic triumphs of the gospel-church in the latter days over the New Testament Babylon, many passages in the Revelation being borrowed from hence. The kingdom of Babylon being much larger and stronger than any other of the kingdoms here prophesied against, its fall was the more considerable in itself; and it having been more oppressive to the people of God than any of the others, the prophet is very large upon this subject, for the comfort of the captive Jews. And what he says about Babylon, before, (ch. xxx. 12. and xxvii. 7.) is here more particularly described, and with a great deal of prophetic heat as well. The terrible judgments God had in store for Babylon, and the gloominess of the_digests, the many in store for his people that were captives there, are intermixed and counterchanged in the prophecy of this chapter; for Babylon was destroyed to make way for the turning again of the captivity of God’s people. Here are I. The ruin of Babylon, (v. 1. 3.) and again, (v. 9 - 16.) and again, (v. 21. 39.) and again, (v. 35. 46.)
redemption of God's people, (v. 4., 8.) and again, (v. 17., 20.) and again, v. 33, 34. And these being set the one against the other, it is easy to see which one would choose to take one's lot with, the persecuting Babyloni-ans, who, though now in pomp, are reserved for so great a thing, or the persecuted Israelites, who, though now in tribulation, are reserved for so great a glory.

1. THE word that the Lord spake against Babylon, and against the land of the Chaldeans, by Jeremiah the prophet. 2. Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces. 3. For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast. 4. 4. In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. 5. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten. 6. My people hath been lost sheep; their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mount to hill, they have forgotten their resting-place. 7. All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice: even the Lord, the hope of their fathers. 3. Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he-goats before the flocks.

Here is,

1. A word spoken against Babylon, by him whose works all agree with his word, and none of whose words fall to the ground. The king of Babylon had been very kind to Jeremiah, and yet he must foretell the ruin of that kingdom; for God's prophets must not be governed by favour or affection. Whether are our friends, if, notwithstanding, they are God's enemies, we dare not speak peace to them.

1. The destruction of Babylon is here spoken of as a thing done. 2. Let it be published to the nation as a piece of news, true news, and great news, and news they are all concerned in; let them hang out the flag, as is usual on days of triumph, to give notice of it; let all the world take notice of it, Babylon is taken; let God have the honour of it, let his people have the comfort of it, and therefore do not confound it. Take care that it be known, that the Lord may be exalted by those judgments which he executes, Ps. ix. 16.

2. It is spoken of as a thing done thoroughly. For, (1.) The very idols of Babylon, which the people would protect with all possible care, and from which they expected protection, shall be destroyed. Bel and Merodach were their two principal deities, they shall be confounded, and the images of them broken to pieces. (2.) The country shall be hewn down, (Ps. lxxiii. 2.) of which the Chaldeans, from Media, which lay north of Babylon, and from Assyria, through which Cyrus made his descent upon Babylon; from thence the nation shall come, that shall make her land desolate. Their land was north of the countries that they destroyed, who were therefore threatened with evil from the north; (Omne malum ab acqualione—Every evil comes from the north;) but God will find out nations yet further north to punish them. The pomp and power of old Rome were brought down by northern nations, the Goths and Vandals.

II. Here is a word spoken for the people of God, and for their comfort, both the children of Israel and of Judah; for many there were of the ten tribes, that associated with those of the two tribes in their return out of Babylon. Now here,

It is promised that they shall return to their God first, and then to their own land; and the promise of their conversion and reformation is that which makes way for all the other promises, v. 4, 5. (1.) They shall lament after the Lord; (as the whole house of Israel did in Samuel's time, 1 Sam. vii. 2.) they shall go weeping. These tears flow not from the sorrow of the world, as those when they went into captivity, but from giddy sorrow; and these are to be turned to joy, and comfort, as the goodness of God, in the dawning of the day of their deliverance, which, for aught that appears, does more toward the bringing of them to mourn for sin, than all the calamities of their captivity: that prevails to lead them to repentance, when the other did not prevail to drive them to it. Note, It is a good sign that God is coming toward a people in ways of mercy, when they begin to be tenderly affected under his hand. (2.) They shall inquire after the Lord; they shall not sink under their sorrows, but beseech themselves to find out comfort where it is to be had; They shall go weeping to seek the Lord their God; These seek the Lord must seek him sorrowing, as Christ's parents sought him, Luke ii. 48. And those that sorrow must seek the Lord, and then their sorrow shall soon be turned into joy, they shall be comforted by the Lord. They shall seek the Lord as their God, and shall now have no more to do with idols. When they shall hear that the idols of Babylon are confounded and broken, it will be seasonable for them to inquire after their own God, and to return to Him who lives for ever. Therefore men are deceived in false gods, that they may depend on the true God only. (3.) They shall think of returning to their own country again; they shall think of it not only as a mercy, but as a duty, because there only is the holy hill of Zion, on which once stood the house of the Lord their God, v. 5. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward. Zion was the city of their solemnities, they often thought of it in the depth of their captivity; (Ps. cxxxvii.) but now that the ruin of Babylon gave a prospect of a release from it, they think of it as nothing else but of going back to Zion. Their hearts were upon it before, and now they set their faces thitherward; they long to be there, they set out for Zion, and resolve not to take up short. The journey is long, they know not the road, but they shall ask the way, for they will press forward till they come to Zion; and as they are determined not to turn back, so they are in no mind to pass by the road that leads to Zion. This represents the return of poor souls to God: heaven is the Zion they aim at as their end, on this they have set their hearts, toward this they have set their faces, and therefore they ask the way thither. They do not ask the way to heaven, and set their faces toward the world; nor set their faces toward heaven, and
go on at a venture without asking the way. But in all true converts there are both a sincere desire to attain the end, and a constant care to keep in the way; and a blessed sight it is, to see people thus asking the way to heaven with their faces shiftingsward round. For the covenant they first made to walk with God closer for the future; Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant. They had broken covenant with God, had in effect separated themselves from him, but now they resolve to join themselves to him again, by engaging themselves fresh to be his. Thus, when backsliders return, they must do their first work in mind, for the record they first made to walk with God must be a perpetual covenant, that must never be broken; and, in order to that, must never be forgotten; for a due remembrance of it will be the means of a due observance of it.

2. Their present case is lamented as very sad, and as having been long so; “My people” (for he owns them as his, now that they are returning to him) “have been lost sheep,” (v. 6.) “they have gone from mountain to hill,” have been hurried from place to place, and could find no pasture, “they have forgotten their resting-place in their own country, and cannot find their way to it.” And that which aggravated their misery, was, (1.) That they were led astray by their own shepherds, their own princes and priests; they turned them from their duty, and so led God to turn them out of their way; when it is done, as it is done, when their leaders cause them to err, when those that should direct and reform them seduce and debauch them; and when those that should secure and advance their interests are the betrayers of them. (2.) That in their wanderings they lay exposed to the beasts of prey, who thought they were entitled to them, as wafins and strays that have no owner; (v. 7.) It is with them as with a harvest, “all that found them have devoured them,” and made a prey of them; and when they did them the greatest injuries, they laughed at them, telling them it was what their own prophets had many a time told them they deserved: that was far from justifying these, who did them wrong, yet they incensed them with this excuse, We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord; but they could not have done that, had they sinned against them. And see what notion they had of the Lord they had sinned against, not as the only true and living God, but only as the Habitation of justice, and the Hope of their fathers; they had put a contempt upon the temple, and upon the tradition of their ancestors, and therefore deserved to suffer these hard things. And yet it was indeed an aggravation of their sin, and justified God, though it did not justly their adversaries in what was done to them, that they had forsaken the Habitation of justice, and him that was the Hope of their fathers.

3. They are called upon to hasten away, as soon as ever the door of liberty was opened to them; (v. 8.) “Remove, not only out of the borders, but out of the midst of Babylon; though you be ever so well settled there, think not to settle there, but hasten to Zion, and be as the he-goats before the flock, strive which shall be foremost, which shall lead in so good a work;” a he-goat is come in going, (Prov. xxx. 31.) because he goes first. It is a graceful thing to be forward in a good work, and to set others a good example.

9. For, lo, I will raise, and cause to come up against Babylon, an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken: their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain. 10. And Chaldea shall be a spoil: all that spoil her shall be satisfied, saith the Lord. 11. Because ye were glad, because ye rejoiced, O ye destroyers of my heritage; because ye are grown fat as the heifer at grass, and bellow as bulls; 12. Your mother shall be sore confounded; she that bare you shall be ashamed: behold, the hindermost of the nations shall be a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert. 13. Because of the wrath of the Lord it shall not be inhabited, but it shall be wholly desolate: every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues. 14. Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about: all ye that bend the bow shoot at her, spare no arrows; for she hath sinned against the Lord. 15. Shout against her round about; she hath given her hand: her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down; for it is the vengeance of the Lord: take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her. 16. Cut off the sower from Babylon, and him that handleth the sickle in the time of harvest: for fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people, and they shall flee every one to his own land. 17. Israel is a scattered sheep, the lions have driven him away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him, and last this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones. 18. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria. 19. And I will bring Israel again to his habitation, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be sate upon mount Ephraim and Gilead. 20. In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve. 

God is here, by his prophet, as afterward in his providence, proceeding in his controversy with Babylon. Observe,

1. The commission and charge given to the instruments that were to be employed in destroying Babylon. The army that is to do it, is called an assembly of great nations, (v. 9.) the Medes and Persians, and all their allies and auxiliaries; it is called an assembly, because regularly formed by the divine will and counsel to do this execution. God will raise them up to do it, will incline them to, and fit them for, this service, and then he will cause them to come up, for all their nations are under his conduct and direction: he shall give the word of command, shall order them to put themselves in array against Babylon, and then they shall put themselves in array, (v. 14.) and then they shall put themselves in array, (v. 9.) for what God appoints to be done shall be done; and from thence she shall
quickly taken; from their first sitting down below it, they shall be still gaining ground against it till it be taken. God shall bid them shoot at her, and spare no arrows, (v. 14.) and then their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man, that has both skill and strength, a good eye, and a good hand; (v. 9.) none shall return in vain. When God gives commission, he will give such a bidden that every one who goeth by shall triumph over her, (v. 14.) but to shoot against her, (v. 15.) with a triumphant shout, as those that are already sure of victory. Those whom God directs to shoot, may do it with shouting, for they are sure not to miss the mark.

2. The desolation and destruction itself that shall be brought upon Babylon. This is set forth here in a great variety of expressions: (1.) The wealth of Babylon is laid waste. It shall be wholly desolate, (v. 13.) to that degree, that every one who goeth by shall triumph in her fall, and, instead of condescending with them, shall hiss at all her plagues, v. 13. (2.) Their ancestors shall be ashamed of their cowardice, in fleeing from the first onset; (v. 12.) or, Your mother, Babylon itself, the mother-city, shall be confounded, when she sees herself deserted by those that should have been her guards. From the first ages of Christians may justly be predicated, that every one who goeth by shall triumph in her fall, and, instead of condescending with them, shall hiss at all her plagues, v. 13. (3.) Their greatness shall be ashamed of their cowardice, in fleeing from the first onset; (v. 12.) or, Your mother, Babylon itself, the mother-city, shall be confounded, when she sees herself deserted by those that should have been her guards. From the first ages of Christians may justly be predicated, that every one who goeth by shall triumph in her fall, and, instead of condescending with them, shall hiss at all her plagues, v. 13. (4.) The great admirers of Babylon shall see it rendered very despicable: the last of kingdoms, the very tail of the nations, shall be a wilderness, a dry land, a desert, v. 12. The country that was populous, shall be despised, that was enriched with a fertile soil, shall be barren. (5.) The great city, the head of it, shall be quite ruined, her foundations are fallen, and therefore her walls are thrown down; for how can the walls stand, when divine vengeance is at the door, and shakes the very foundations? It is the vengeance of the Lord, which nothing can contend with either in law or battle. (6.) There shall not be left in Babylon so much as a stump, a stone, a boulder, a rock, or a mountain; nor shall they be the land, for vine-dressers and husbandmen, as there was in Israel: (v. 16.) The sower shall be cut off from Babylon, and he that handles the sickle; the country shall be so emptied of people, that there shall be none to till the ground, and gather in the fruits of it. Harvest shall come, and there shall be no reapers; reediness shall come, and there shall be no sower; God will do his part, but there shall be no men to do theirs. (7.) All their auxiliary forces, which have hired into their service, shall desert them, as mercenaries men often do upon the approach of danger; (v. 16.) for fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people. This was threatened before, concerning Egypt, ch. xlv. 16. 

3. The procuring, provoking cause of this destruction. It comes from God's displeasure; it is because of the wrath of the Lord, that Babylon shall be wholly desolate; (v. 13.) and his wrath is righteous, for, (v. 14.) she hath sinned against the Lord, therefore spare no arrows. Note, It is sin that makes men mark a mark for the arrows of God's judgments. An abundance of idolatry and immorality, (v. 7.) and despising of the word of God, (v. 10.) and a corrupting of his ordinances, (v. 11.) have made them a vessel for punishment, and brought on them a sufferance of that sort, which is as a reproach to the reproachers of God, and a reproach to his successors. Note, (1.) Those are not mentioned as the reason of God's displeasure against them, but the injuries they had done to the people of God, from a principle of enmity to them as his people. They have been the destroyers of God's heritage; (v. 11.) herein indeed God made use of them for the necessary correction of his people; and yet it is laid to their charge as a heinous crime, because they designed nothing but their utter destruction. (1.) What they did against Jerusalem they did with pleasure; (v. 11.) Ye were glad, ye rejoiced, when God does not afflict his people willingly, and therefore they are here in it, as a note of those that afflicts them willingly. When Titus Vespasian destroyed Jerusalem, he wept over it, but these Chaldeans triumphed over it. (2.) The spoils of Jerusalem they made use of to feed their own luxury: Ye are grown fat as the heifer at grass, and belted as bulks: your conquering Jerusalem has made you very wanton and proud, and therefore you must be conquered. They that have thus swallowed down riches, must vomit them up again. Therefore they have given their hand; (v. 13.) they have surrendered themselves to the conqueror, have tamely yielded, so that now you may take vengeance on her, now you may make reprisals, and do unto her as she hath done. (3.) They have trod upon nothing less than the utter ruin of God's Israel: Israel is a scattered sheep, as before, (v. 6.) that is not only barked at and worried by dogs, but even lions, the most potent adversaries, have roared upon him, and driven him away, v. 17. One King of Assyria carried the ten tribes quite away, and devoured them; another invaded Judah, and plundered and impoverished it, tore the fleece and flesh of his poor sheep; and now at last this Nebuchadrezzar, that is the terror and plague of all his neighbours, has taken advantage of the low condition to which he is reduced, and he has fallen upon him, and broken his bones, has quite ruined him, and therefore the King of Babylon must be punished as the King of Assyria was, v. 18. Note, Those who pursue and prosecute the sins of their predecessors, must expect to be pursued and prosecuted by their plagues; if they do as they did, let them fare as they fared.

4. The mercy promised to the Israel of God, which shall not only accompany, but accrue from, the destruction of Babylon. (1.) God will return their captivity, they shall be released out of their bondage, and brought again to their own habitation, as sheep that were scattered, to their own fold: (v. 19.) or, they shall be gathered. They are mentioned at the end of the four hundred years, as the people of Canaan, it is their habitation still, the discontinuance of their possession was not the destruction of their right, but now they shall recover the enjoyment of it again. (2.) He will restore their prosperity; they shall not only live, but live comfortably, in their own land again; they shall feed upon Carmel and Bashan, the richest and most fruitful parts of the country. These sheep shall be gathered from the deserts to which they were dispersed, and put again into good pasture, which their soul shall be satisfied with; though they shall come hungry to it, having been so long stinted, and straitened, and kept short, yet they shall find enough to satisfie them, and shall have hearts to be satisfied with it. They inquired the way to Zion, (v. 5.) where they were wont to look for help: it was that it they chiefly aimed at in their return, but God will not only bring them thither, but bring them also to Carmel and Bashan, where they shall abundantly feed themselves. Note, They that return to God and their duty, shall find true satisfaction of soul in so doing; and they that seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, that aim in their greatest distress to their God, they shall have other things added to them, even all the comforts of Eliphram and Gilead, the fruitful hills. (3.) God will pardon their iniquity; this is
her young men fall in the streets, and all her men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the Lord. 31. Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord God of hosts: for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee. 32. And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up: and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him.

Here, 1. The forces are mustered and commissioned to destroy Babylon, and are ready for a descent upon the great kingdom of Babylon. 2. Cyrus, who was raised up to go up against that land by Merathaim, the country of the Medes, that lay part in Assyria, and part in Armenia; and go among the inhabitants of Pekod, another country, (mentioned Ezek. xxiii. 23.) which Cyrus took in his way to Babylon. The forces of Cyrus are called to go up against Babylon, (v. 21.) to come against her from the utmost border. Let all come together, for there will be both work and pay enough for them all, v. 26. Distance of place must not be their hindrance from engaging in this work; the archers particularly must be called together against Babylon, v. 29. Thus the Lord hath opened his armoury, (v. 28.) his treasury, (so the word is,) and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation; as great princes fetch cut of their armouries and stores all necessary provision for their armies, when they undertake any great expedition. Media and Persia are now God's armoury, thence he fetches the weapons of his wrath, Cyrus, and his great officers and armies, whom he will make use of for the destruction of Babylon. Note, Great men are but instruments which the great God makes use of to serve his own purposes. He hath his cannon, his wine, his weapons, to make a show of, and so he may, when there is need, and as the occasion is. This is the work of the Lord God of hosts. Note, When God has work to do, he will make it appear that he is God of hosts, and will not want instruments to do it with.

2. Instructions are given them what to do. In general, Do according to all that I have commanded you, (v. 1.) It was said of Cyrus, (Isa. xlv. 28.) He shall perform the vision, in his expedition against Babylon. They must waste and utterly destroy after them; when they have destroyed once, they must go over them again; or destroy their posterity that should come after them. They must often her storehouses, (v. 26.) rifle her treasures, and turn her artillery against herself; they must cast her up as heaps; let all the wealth and pomp of Babylon be shovelled up in a heap of ruins and rubbish. Tread her down as heaps, (so the margin reads it,) and destroy her utterly. See how little account the great God makes of those things which men so much value, and value themselves upon! Their princes and great men, who are fat and bulky, shall fall by the sword, not as men of war in the field of battle, which we call a bed of honour, but as beasts by the butcher's hand; (v. 27.) Slay all her bullocks, all her mighty men; let them go down sodisfying and inscrupulous, as an ox to the slaughter. We unto them, their case is the more sad for the little sense they have of it; their day is come to fall, the time when they must be reckoned with, and they are not aware of it.

3. Assurance is given them of success. Let them do what the Lord commands, and they shall accomplish what he threatens. A great destruction shall be made, v. 22. Babylon shall become a desolation; (v. 23.) her young men, and all her men of war, shall be cut off in that day, that should have been her defence; (v. 30.) God is against her.
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(v. 31.) he has laid a snare for her; (v. 24.) he hath formed this enterprise against her, that she should be surprised as a bird taken in a snare; and she shall, no doubt, prevail, for he fights under God; God will kindle a fire in the cities of Babylon; (v. 32.) and who can stand before him when he is angry, or quench the fire that he has kindled?

4. Reasons are given for these severe dealings with Babylon. They that are employed in this war, may, if they please, know the grounds of it, and be satisfied in the justice of it, which it is all should be. (2.) Babylon has been very troublesome, vexatious, and injurious, to all its neighbours; it has been the hammer of the whole earth, (v. 23.) beating, beating down, and beating to pieces, all the nations far and near. It has done so long enough; it is time now that it be cut asunder and broken. Note, He that is the God of nations will, sooner or later, assert the injured right of nations against those that unjustly and violently invade them. The God of the whole earth will break the hammer of the whole earth. (2.) Babylon has bid defiance to God himself; Thou hast striven against the Lord, (v. 24.) hast joined issue with him, (so the word signifies,) as in law or battle, hast openly opposed him, set up rivals with him, raised rebellion against him; therefore thou art now found, and caught, as in a snare. Note, This is the last stroke against the Lord will soon find themselves over-matched. (3.) Babylon ruined Jerusalem, the holy city, and the holy house there, and must now be called to an account for that. This is the manifesto published in Zion, in the day of Babylon's visitation; it is the vengeance of the Lord our God, the vengeance of his people, v. 28.

The burning of the temple, and the carrying away of its vessels, were articles in the charge against Babylon, on which greater stress was laid than upon its being the hammer of the whole earth; for Zion was the joy and glory of the whole earth. Note, Whatever wrong is done to God's church, (his temple in the world,) it will certainly be reckoned for; and no vengeance will be soer and heavier than the vengeance of the temple. (4.) Babylon had been very haughty and insolent, and therefore must have a fall. For it is the glory of God to look upon those that are proud, and to abase them, Job xl. 12. I am against thee, O thou most proud, v. 31. Thou pride; (so the word is;) and again, v. 32. as proud as pride itself. Note, The pride of men's hearts sets God against them, and ripens them an ace for ruin; for God resists the proud, and will bring them down. The most proud shall stumble and fall; they shall fall not so much by others thrusting them down, as by their own stumbling; for they hold their heads so high, that they never look under their feet, to choose their way, and avoid stumbling-blocks, but walk at all adventures. Babylon's pride must unavoidably be her ruin; for she has been proud against the Lord, against the Holy One of Israel, (v. 29.) has insulted him in insulting over his people; she has made him Enemey. And therefore, when she is fallen, none shall raise her up, v. 32. Who can help those up whom God will throw down?

33. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, The children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together; and all that took them captives held them fast; they refused to let them go. 34. Their Redeemer is strong; The Lord of hosts is his name; he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon. 35. A sword is upon the Chaldeans, saith the Lord, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon her princes, and upon her wise men. 36. A sword is upon the liars; and they shall dote; a sword is upon her mighty men; and they shall be dismayed. 37. A sword is upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that are in the midst of her; and they shall become as women; a sword is upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed. 38. A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols. 39. Therefore the wild beasts of the desert, with the wild beasts of the islands, shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. 40. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the Lord; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein. 41. Behold, a people shall come from the north, and a great nation, and many kings shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. 42. They shall hold the bow and the lance; they are cruel, and will not shew mercy; their voice shall roar like the sea, and they shall ride upon horses, every one put in array, like a man to the battle, against thee, O daughter of Babylon. 43. The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them, and his hands waxed feeble; anguish took hold of him, and pangs as of a woman in travail. 44. Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan unto the habitation of the strong; but I will make them suddenly run away from her; and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me? 45. Therefore hear ye the counsel of the Lord that he hath taken against Babylon, and his purposes that he hath purposed against the land of the Chaldeans; Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out; surely he shall make their habitation desolate with them. 46. At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations.

We have, in these verses, 1. Israel's sufferings, and their deliverance out of those sufferings. God takes notice of the bondage of his people in Babylon, as he did of their bondage in Egypt; he hath surely seen it, and has heard their cry. Israel and Judah were oppressed together, v. 33. Those that remained of the captives of the ten tribes, upon the uniting of the kingdoms of Assyria and Chaldea, seemed to have come and
mangled themselves with those of the two tribes, and to have mangled tears with them, so that they were oppressed together. They were humble suppliants for their liberty, and that was all; they could not attempt any thing towards it, for all that took them captives held them fast, and were too hard for them. But this is their comfort in distress, that, though they are weak, their Redeemer is strong; (cp. ver. 12) and (1 Pet. iv. 14) that has a right to them, and will claim his right, and make good his claim; he is stronger than their enemies that hold them fast; he can overpower all the force that is against them, and put strength into his own people though they are very weak. The Lord of hosts is his name, and he will answer to his name, and make it to appear that he is what his people call him, and will be that to them, for which they depend upon him. Note, It is the unspeakable comfort of the people of God, that, though they have hosts against them, they have the Lord of hosts for them; and he shall thoroughly plead their cause; pleading he shall plead it, plead it with jealousy, plead it effectually, plead it, and carry it, that he may give rest to the land, to his people's land, rest from all their enemies round about. This is his work, and he will do it. It is a great confession of their dominion of sin and corruption, and of their own weakness and manifold infirmities; let them know that their Redeemer is strong, he is able to keep what they commit to him, and he will plead their cause, sin shall not have dominion over them; he will make them free, and they shall be free indeed; he will give them rest, that rest which remains for the people of God.


1. The sins they are here charged with are, idolatry and persecution. (1.) They oppressed the people of God, they held them fast, and would not let them go; they opened not the house of his prisoners, Isa. xiv. 17. This was God's quarrel with them, as with old, with Pharaoh; it cost him dear, and yet they would not take warning. The inhabitants of Babylon must be disgusted, (v. 34.) because they have disquieted God's people, whose honour and comfort he is jealous for, and therefore will recompense tribulation to those that trouble them, as well as rest to them that are troubled. 2 Thess. i. 6, 7.

(2.) They wronged God himself, and robbed him, giving that grace to others, which is due to him alone. (v. 38.) It is the sum of their disgrace, all parts of the country abounded with idols, and they were mad upon them, were in love with them, and doted on them, cared not what cost and pains they were at in the worship of them, were unwearied in paying their respects to them, and in all this they were wretchedly infatuated, and acted like men out of their wits; they were carried on in their idolatry without regard or discretion, like men in a perfect fury. The word here used for idols, properly signifies terrors, Enim, the name given to giants that were formidable, because they made the images of their gods to look frightful, to strike a terror upon fools and children. Their idols were scarecrows, yet they doted on them. Babylon was the mother of harlots, (Rev. xviii. 5.) the source of their idolatry, without regard or discretion, like men to make a god of any creature; and those who are proud against the Lord, the true God, are justly given up to strong delusions, to be made upon idols that cannot profit. But this madness is wickedness, for which sinners will be certainly and severely reckoned with.

2. The judgments of God upon them for these sins, were such as would quite lay them waste, and ruin them.

(1.) All that should be their defence and support shall be cut off by the sword. The Chaldeans had long been God's sword, wherewith he had done execution upon the sinful nations round about; but now, they being as bad as any of them, or worse, a sword is brought upon them, even upon the inhabitants of Babylon, (v. 35.) a sword of war; and, as it is in God's hand, sent and directed by him, it is a sword of justice. It shall be, [1.] Upon their princes; things shall be by it, and their dignity, wealth, and power, shall be slain. [2.] Upon their servants, the wise men, their philosophers, their statesmen and privy-councillors; their learning and policy shall neither secure themselves, nor stand the public in any stead. [3.] Upon their sionthayers and astrologers, here called the liars, (v. 36.) for they cheated with their prognostications of peace and prosperity; this sword upon them shall make them dote, so that they shall lack wits. Note, God has a sword that can reach the soul and affect the mind, and bring men under spiritual plagues. [4.] Upon their mighty men; a sword shall be upon their spirits; if they are not slain, yet they shall be dismayed, and shall be no longer mighty men; for what state will their hands stand them in when their hearts fail them? (v. 37.)

(4.) Upon their horses and chariots, the invaders shall make themselves masters of all their warlike stores, shall seize their horses and chariots for themselves, and destroy them. The troops of other nations, that were in their service, shall be quite disheartened, the mingled people shall become as weak and timorous as women. [5.] Upon their exchequer; the sword shall be upon her treasures, which are the sinews of war, and they shall be robbed, and made use of by the enemy against them. See what universal destruction the sword makes when it comes with commission!

(2.) The country shall be made desolate; (v. 38.) The waters shall be dried up; the water that secures the city. Cyrus drew the river Euphrates into so many channels as made it passable for his army, so that they got with ease to the walls of Babylon, which were thought, having such a river before them, to be inaccessible. The water likewise, that made the country fruitful, shall be dried up, so that it shall be turned into barrenness, and shall be no more inhabited by the children of men, but by the wild beasts of the desert, v. 39. This was foretold concerning Babylon, Isa. xiii. 19—22. The same was foretold concerning Edom, ch. xlix. 18. As the Chaldeans had laid Edom waste, so they shall themselves be laid waste.

(3.) The king and kingdom shall be put into the utmost confusion and consternation by the enemies' invading of them, v. 41—43. All the expressions here used, bespeaking the formidable power of the invaders, wherewith they should array themselves, and the fright which both court and country should be put into thereby, we met with before, (ch. vi. 22—24.) concerning the Chaldeans invading the land of Judah. This battle, which is there said to be against thee, O daughter of Zion, is here said to be against thee, O daughter of Babylon, to intimate that they should be paid in like kind, and they could not be paid, that is, they could not find out such as shall be for terror and destruction to those that are for terror and destruction to others. And those who have dealt cruelly, and have showed no mercy, may expect to be cruelly dealt with, and to find no mercy. Only there is one difference between these passages; there it is said, We have heard the fame thereof, and our hands wax feeble; here it is said, The king of Babylon has heard the report, and his heart waxed feeble; which intimates that that proud and daring prince shall, in the day of his distress, be as
weak and dispiritèd as the meanest Israelites were in the day of their distress.

(4.) That they shall be as much hurt as fright-
èned, for the invader shall come up like a lion to
tear and destroy, (v. 44.) and shall make them and
t heir habitation desolate; (v. 45.) and the desola-
tion shall be so astonishing, that all the nations about
shall be terrify'd by it, v. 46. These three verses
we had before, (ch. xliii. 19.—21.) in the prophecy
of the destruction of Edom, which was accomplished
by the Chaldeans, and they are here repeated,
mutatis mutandis—with a few necessary alterations,
in the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon,
which was to be accomplished upon the Chaldeans,
to show that though the distributions of Providence
may appear unequal for a time, its retributions will
be equal at last; when thou shalt make an end to
spirit, thou shalt be spoiled, Isa. xxxiii. 1.—Rev.
xiii. 10.

CHAP. LI.

The prophet, in this chapter, goes on with the prediction
of Babylon's fall, to which other prophets also bare wit-
ness. He is very large and lively in describing the fore-
sight God had given him of it, for the encouragement of
the captive, whose deliverance depended upon it, and
was to be the result of it. Here is, I. The record of
Babylon's doom, with the particulars of it, intermixed
with the grounds of God's controversy with her, many
aggravations of her fall, and great encouragements given
from thence to the Israel of God, that suffered such hard
things by her, v. 1. 58. II. The representation and rati-
fication of this, by the throwing of a copy of this pro-
phy into the river Euphrates, v. 59. 64.

1. THUS saith the Lord, Behold, I will
raise up against Babylon, and against
them that dwell in the midst of them that
rise up against me, a destroying wind;
2. And will send unto Babylon fanners,
that shall fan her, and shall empty her land:
for in the day of trouble they shall be against
her round about. 3. Against him that
bendeth let the archer bend his bow, and against
him that lifteth himself up in his braggardine:
and spare ye not your young men; destroy ye
utterly all her host. 4. Thus the slain shall
fall in the land of the Chaldeans, and they
that are thrust through in her streets. 5.
For Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Ju-
dah of his God, of the Lord of hosts; though
their land was filled with sin against the
Holy One of Israel. 6. Flee out of the midst
of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul;
be not cut off in her iniquity: for this is the
time of the Lord's vengeance; he will ren-
der unto her a recompense. 7. Babylon
hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand,
that made all the earth drunken: the nations
have drunken of her wine; therefore the na-
tions are mad. 8. Babylon is suddenly fallen
and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for
her pain, if so be she may be healed. 9. We
would have healed Babylon, but she is not
healed: forsake her, and let us go every one
into his own country; for her judgment
reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even
to the skies. 10. The Lord hath brought
forth our righteousness: come, and let us de-
clare in Zion the work of the Lord our
God. 11. Make bright the arrows, gather
the shields: the Lord hath raised up the
spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his de-
vice is against Babylon, to destroy it; be-
cause it is the vengeance of the Lord, the
vengeance of his temple. 12. Set up the
standard upon the walls of Babylon, make
the watch strong; set up the watchmen, pre-
pare the ambushes: for the Lord hath both
devised and done that which he spake
against the inhabitants of Babylon. 13. O
though that dwelleth upon many waters, abun-
dant in treasures, thine end is come, and the
measure of thy covetousness. 14. The Lord
of hosts hath sworn by himself, saying,
Surely I will fill thee with men as with
caterpillars; and they shall lift up a shout
against thee. 15. He hath made the earth
by his power, he hath established the world
by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the
heaven by his understanding. 16. When he
uttereth his voice there is a multitude of wa-
ters in the heavens; and he causeth the va-
ours to ascend from the ends of the earth:
he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth
forth the wind out of his treasures. 17.
Every man is brutish by his knowledge;
every founder is confounded by the graven
image: for his molten image is falsehood,
and there is no breath in them. 18. They
are vanity, the work of errors: in the time
of their visitation they shall perish. 19. The
Portion of Jacob is not like them; for he is
the Former of all things, and Israel is the
rod of his inheritance; The Lord of hosts
is his name. 20. Thou art my battle-axe
and weapons of war: for with thee will I
break in pieces the nations; and with thee
will I destroy kingdoms; 21. And with thee
will I break in pieces the horse and his
rider; and with thee will I break in pieces
the chariot and his rider; 22. With thee
also will I break in pieces man and woman;
and with thee will I break in pieces old and
young; and with thee will I break in pieces
the young man and the maid; 23. I will
also break in pieces with thee the shepherd
and his flock; and with thee will I break
in pieces the husbandman and his yoke of
oxen; and with thee will I break in pieces
captains and rulers. 24. And I will render
unto Babylon, and to all the inhabitants of
Chaldea, all their evil that they have done
in Zion in thy sight, saith the Lord. 25.
Behold, I am against thee, O destroying
mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest
all the earth; and I will stretch out my
hand upon thee, and roll thee down from
the rocks, and will make thee a burnt moun-
taint. 26. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the LORD. 27. Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz; appoint a captain against her; cause her horses to come up as the rough caterpillars. 28. Prepare against her the nations, with the kings of the Medes, the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion. 29. And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant. 30. The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, they have remained in their holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burnt their dwelling-places; her bars are broken. 31. One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end, and that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burnt with fire, and the men of war are affrighted. 32. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing-floor, it is time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come. 33. Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his belly with my delicacies, he hath cast me out. 34. The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and, My blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say. 35. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry. 36. And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment, and a hissing without an inhabitant. 37. They shall roar together like lions: they shall yell as lions' whelps. 38. In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the LORD. 39. I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams with goats. 40. How is Sheshach taken! and how is the praise of the whole earth surprise-d! how is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations! 41. The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof. 42. Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby. 43. And I will punish Bel in Babylon; and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up: and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him; yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall. 44. My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD. 45. And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land: a rumour shall both come one year, and after that in another year shall come a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler. 46. Therefore, behold, the days come, that I will do judgment upon the graven images of Babylon: and her whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her. 47. Then the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, shall sing for Babylon; for the spoilers shall come unto her from the north, saith the LORD. 48. As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth. 49. Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind. 50. We are confounded, because we have heard reproach; shame hath covered our faces; for strangers are come into the sanctuaries of the LORD's house. 51. Wherefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will do judgment upon her graven images; and through all her land the wounded shall groan. 52. Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the LORD. 53. A sound of a cry cometh from Babylon, and great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans: 54. Because the LORD hath spoiled Babylon, and destroyed out of her the great voice; when her waves do roar like great waters, a noise of their voice is uttered: 55. Because the spoiler is come upon her, even upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken; every one of their bows is broken: for the Lord God of recompenses shall surely requite. 56. And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is The LORD of hosts. 57. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burnt with fire; and the people shall labour
in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary.

The particulars of this copious prophecy are dispersed and interwoven, and the same things left and returned to so often, that it could not well be divided into parts, but we must endeavour to collect them under their proper heads.

Let us then observe here,

1. An acknowledgment of the great pomp and power that Babylon had been in, and the use that God in his providence had made of it; (v. 7.) Babylon hath been a golden cup, a rich and glorious empire, a golden city, (Isa. xiv. 4.) a head of gold, (Dan. ii. 38.) filled with all good things, as a cup with wine; nay, she had been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, he had in a particular manner filled and favoured her with blessings, he had made the earth drunk with this cup's judgments, and heathens with her pleasures, and debauched by her others intoxicated with her terrors, and destroyed by her. In both senses, the New Testament Babylon is said to have made the kings of the earth drunk, Rev. xvii. 4.—xviii. 3. Babylon had also been God's battle-ax; it was so at this time, when Jeremiah prophesied, and was likely to be yet more so, v. 29. The forces of Babylon were God's weapons of war, tools in his hands, able to break up or destroy any land, its turbulent pieces, and knocked down, nations and kingdoms, horses and chariots, which are so much the strength of kingdoms; (v. 21.) men and women, young and old, with which kingdoms are replenished; (v. 22.) the shepherd and his flock, the husbandman and his oxen, with which kingdoms are maintained and supplied, v. 23. Such havoc as this the Chaldeans had made, when God employed them as instruments of his wrath, and employed Babylon with all his forces, God has put Babylon herself must fall. Note, Those that have carried all before them a great while, will yet at length meet with their match, and their day also will come to fall, the rod will itself be thrown into the fire at last; nor can any think it will exempt them from God's judgments, that they have been instrumental in executing his judgments on others.

2. The just complaint made of Babylon, and a charge drawn up against her by the Israel of God. (1.) They are complained of for their incorrigible wickedness; (v. 9.) We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed. The people of God that were captives among them, endeavoured, according to the instructions given them, (Jer. x. 11.) to convince them of the folly of their idolatry, but they could not do it; still the Babylonians doted as much as ever upon their graven images, and the Israelites resolve to quit them, and go to their own country. Yet some understand this as spoken by the forces they hired for their assistance, declaring that they had done their best to save her from ruin, but that it was all to no purpose, and therefore they had as good go home to their respective countries; for her judgment reaches unto heaven; that is, they declare that God has resolved to avert it. (2.) They are complained of for their in-veterate malice against Israel; other nations had been hardly used by the Chaldeans, but Israel only complains to God of it, and with confidence appeals to him, (v. 34, 35.) "The king of Babylon has devoured me, and crushed me, and never thought he could do enough to ruin me; he has enfeebled me of all that was valuable, broken me up as with a dragon or whole swallow up the little fish by shoals; he has filled his belly, filled his treasures, with my delights, with all my pleasant things, and has cast me out, cast me away as a vessel in which there is no pleasure; and now let them be accountable for all this." Zion and Jerusalem shall say, "Let the violence done to me and my children, that are my own, flesh, and pieces of myself, and all the blood of my people, which they have shed like water, be avenged; let the guilt of it li the earth, and it be required at their hand." Note, Ruin is not far off from those that lie under the guilt of wrong done to God's people.

3. Judgment given upon this appeal by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, on behalf of Israel against Babylon. He sits in the throne judging right, is ready to receive complaints, and answers, (v. 35.) "I know what they say they will do, I will in due time plead it effectually, and take vengeance for thee; and every drop of Jerusalem's blood shall be accounted for with interest." Israel and Judah seem to have been neglected and forgotten, but God has an eye to them, v. 5. It is true, their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel, they were a provoking people, and their sin was a great offence to God, as a holy God, and as their God, their Holy One; and therefore he justly delivered them up into the hands of their enemies, and might justly have abandoned them, and left them to perish in their hands; but God deals better with them than they deserve, and, notwithstanding their iniquities and his severities, Israel is not forsaken, is not cast off, though he be cast out, but is owned and looked after by his God, by the peculiar mercies of his kingdom; and God's people are his Lord and Hosts, a God of power. Note, Though God's people may have broken his laws, and fallen under his rebukes, yet it does not therefore follow that they are thrown out of covenant; but God's care of them and love to them will flourish again, Ps. lxxxix. 30, 33. The Chaldeans thought they should never be called to an account for what they had done against God's Israel; but there is a day of reckoning, and a time to pay, and that it should come sooner than the time fixed, but then it will come; he will render unto Babylon a recompense, for the avenging of Israel is the vengeance of the Lord, who espouses their cause; it is the vengeance of his temple, (v. 11.) as before, ch. i. 28. The Lord of recompenses, the God to whom vengeance belongs, will surely require, (v. 56.) will pay them home; he will render unto Babylon all the evil they have done in Zion, (v. 24.) he will return it in the sight of his people; they shall have the satisfaction to see their cause pleaded with jealousy; they shall not only live to see those judgments brought upon Babylon, but they shall plainly see them to be the punishment of the wrong they have done to Zion; and man may see it, and say, Verily there is a God that judges in the earth; for just as Babylon has used the blood of Israel to fall, has not only slain those that were found in arms, but all without distinction; even all the land, (almost all were put to the sword,) so at Babylon shall fall, the slain not only of the city, but of all the country, v. 49. Cyrus shall measure to the Chaldeans the same that they measured to the Jews, so that every observer may discern that God is recompensing them for their sins against his people; but Zion's children shall in a particular manner triumph in it; (v. 10.) "The Lord has brought forth our righteousness, he has appeared in our behalf against those that dealt unjustly with us, and has righted us; he has also made it to appear that he is reconciled to us, and that we are yet in his eyes a righteous nation. Let it therefore be spoken of his praise, Lord of hosts, this is God, the Lord our God, that others may be invited to join with us in praising him." 4. A declaration of the greatness and sovereignty of that God who espouses Zion's cause, and undertakes to reckon with this proud and potent enemy; (v. 14.) It is the Lord of hosts that has said it, that has sworn it, has sworn it by himself, for he could
5:1. An universal interposition by no greater, that he will fill Babylon with vast and incredible numbers of the enemy's forces, will fill it with men as with caterpillars, that shall overpower it with multitudes, and need only to lift up a shout against it, for that shall be so terrible as to dispirit all that attempt to stand against them, and carry away to this numerous army. But who, and where, is he that can break so powerful a kingdom as Babylon? The prophet gives an account of him from the description he had formerly given of him, and of his sovereignty and victory over all pretenders, (Jer. x. 12-16,) which was there intended for the conviction of the Babylonian idolaters, and the confirmation of God's Israel in the faith and works of the God of Israel; and it is here repeated, to show that God will convince those by his judgments, who would not be convinced by his word, that he is God over all. Let not any doubt but that he who has determined to destroy Babylon, is able to make his words good, for, (1.) He is the God that made the world, (v. 15.) and therefore nothing is too hard for him to do; it is in his name that our help stands, and on him our hope is built. (2.) He has the command of all the creatures that he has made; (v. 16.) his providence is a continued creation; he has wind and rain at his disposal; if he speak the word, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; and it is a wonder how they hang there, fed by vapours out of the earth; and it is a wonder how they ascend thence. Lightnings and rain seem contrary all the time, and the less any may be produced together; and the wind, which seems arbitrary in its motions, and we know not whence it cometh, is yet, we are sure, brought out of his treasures. (3.) The idols that oppose the accomplishment of his word, are a mere sham, and their worshippers brutish people, v. 17, 18. The idols are falsehood, they are vanity, they are the work of empty thoughts, and the more can be profaned and inquired into, they perish, their reputation sinks, and they appear to be nothing; and those that make them are like unto them. But between the God of Israel and these gods of the heathen there is no comparison; (v. 19.) The portion of Jacob is not like them; the God who speaks this, and will do it, is the Former of all things, and the door of all that he doeth, and the box can be opened when he will; and there is a near relation between him and his people, for he is their Portion, and they are his; they put a confidence in him as their Portion, and he is pleased to take a complacency in them, and a particular care of them, as the lot of his inheritance; and therefore he will do what is best for them. The repetition of these things here, which were said before, intimates both the certainty and the importance of them, and oblige us to take special notice of them; God hath spoken once, yea, twice have we heard this, that power belongs to God; power to destroy the most formidable enemies of his church; and if God thus speak once, yea, twice, we are inexcusable if we do not perceive it, and attend to it. 5. A description of the instruments that are to be employed against Babylon. The Chaldeans are compared to the spirits of the kings of the Medes, (v. 11.) Darius and Cyrus, who come against Babylon by a divine instinct; for God's device is against Babylon to destroy it; they do it, but God devised it, he designed it; they are but accomplishing his purpose, and acting as he directed. Note, God's counsel shall stand, and according to it all hearts shall move. Those whom God employs against Babylon are compared to a destroying wind, (v. 1.) to a destroying wind, which either by its coldness blasts the fruits of the earth, or by its fierceness blows down all before it; this wind is brought out of God's treasures, (v. 16.) and it is here said to be raised up against them that dwell in the midst of the Midianites, those of other nations that inhabit among them, and are incorporated with them. The Chaldeans rise up against God by falling down before idols, and against them God will raise up destroyers, for he will be too hard for them that contest with him. These enemies are compared to the Chaldeans, (v. 3.) and not of his young men, but utterly destroy them, for the Lord has both devised and done what he spake against Babylon, v. 12. This may animate the instruments he employs, by assuring them of success; the methods they take are such as God has devised, and therefore they shall surely prosper; what he has spoken shall be done, for he himself will do it; and therefore let all necessary preparations be made; this they are called to, v. 27, 28. Let a standard be set up, under which to enlist soldiers for this expedition: let a trumpet be blown to call men together to it, and animate them in it; let the nations, out of which Cyrus's army is to be raised, prepare their recruits; let the kingdoms of Ararat and Minni, and Askenaz, of Armenia, both the higher and the lower, and the gentile Babylonia, and the Chaldeasmallest of them in their quota of men for this service; let general officers be appointed, and the cavalry advance; let the horses come up in great numbers, as the caterpillars, and come, like them, leaping and pawing in the valley; let them lay the country waste, as caterpillars do, (Isa. 1:4.) especially rough caterpillars; let the kings and captains prepare nations against Babylon, for the service is great, and there is occasion for many hands to be employed in it. 6. The weakness of the Chaldeans, and their inability to make head against this threatening, destroying force. When God employed them against other nations, they had spirit and strength in act offensively, and went on with admirable resolution, conquering and to conquer; but now that it comes to their turn, they have it not; all their might and courage are gone, their hearts fail them, and none of all their men of might and mettle have found their hands to act so much as defensively. They are called upon here to prepare for action, but it is ironically, and in an upbraiding way; (v. 11.) Make bright the arrows, which are grown rusty through disuse; gather the shields, which in a long time to peace and security have been scattered, and thenceforth out of the way; (v. 12.) Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, upon the towers on those walls, to summon all that owed suit and service to that mother-city, now to come in to her assistance. Let them make the watch as strong as they can, and appoint the sentinels to their respective posts, and prepare ambushes for the reception of the foe. This was the manner in which the towers would be found very secure and remiss, and would need to be thus quickened; (and they were so to that degree, that they were in the midst of their revels when the city was taken;) but that all their preparations should be to no purpose; who will may call them to it, but they shall have no heart to come at the call, v. 29. The whole land shall tremble and fall, and the conquerors shall seize upon them, for they shall see both the irresistible arm, and the irreversible counsel and decree, of God against them; they shall see that God is making Babylon a desolation, and therein is performing what he has purposed; and then the mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, v. 30. God having taken away their strength.
and spirit, so that they have remained in their holds, not daring so much as to peep forth, the might both of their hearts and of their hands fails, they become as timorous as women, so that the enemy has, without any resistance, burnt her dwelling-places, and broken her bars. It is to the same purport with v. 56.—58. When the spoiler comes upon Babylon, her mighty men, who should make head against him, are immediately taken, or their work is broken, and they fall. The hedges of the bower are broken, and stands them in no stead; their policies fail them, they call councils of war, but their princes and captains, who sit in council to concert measures for the common safety, are made drunk, they are as men intoxicated through stupidity or despair, they can form no right notions of things, they stagger, and are unsteady in their counsels and resolves, and dash one against another like wild beasts, and all among themselves; at length they sleep a perpetual sleep, and never awake from their wine, the wine of God's wrath, for it is to them an opiate that lays them into a fatal lethargy. The walls of their city fail them, v. 58. When the enemy had found ways to ford Euphrates, which was thought impassable, yet surely, think they, the walls are impregnable, they are the bravest walls of earth and paradise, made ready the walls of broad Babylon; the compass of the city, within the walls, was 385 furlongs, some say 480, that is, about sixty miles; the walls were 200 cubits high, and 50 cubits broad, so that two chariots might easily pass by one another upon them. Some say that there was a threefold wall about the inner city, and the like upon the outer; and that the stones of the wall, being laid flat, instead of mortar, (Gen. xi. 3.) were scarcely separable; and yet these shall be utterly broken, and the high gates and towers shall be burnt, and the people that are employed in the defence of the city shall labour in vain, in the fire, they shall quite tire themselves, but shall do no good.

8. The destruction that shall be made of Babylon by these invaders: (1.) It is a certain destruction, the doom is past, and it cannot be reversed; a divine power is engaged against it, which cannot be resisted; (v. 8.) Babylon is fallen and destroyed, is as sure to fall, to fall into destruction, as if it were fallen and destroyed already; though, when Jeremiah prophesied this, and many a year after, it was in the height of its power and greatness. God declares, God appears against Babylon; (v. 25.) Babylon is without help; her hope is perished, all whom God is against; he will stretch out his hand upon it, a hand which no creature can bear the weight of, or withstand the force of. It is his purpose which shall be performed, that Babylon must be a desolation, v. 29. (2.) It is a righteous destruction; Babylon has made herself meet for it, and therefore cannot fail to meet with it. For, (v. 25.) Babylon, which is a very bulky as a mountain, and destroying all the earth, as the stones that are tumbled from high mountains spoil the grounds about them; but now it shall itself be rolled down from its rocks, which were as the foundations on which it stood; it shall be levelled, its pomp and power broken. It is now a burning mountain, like Ætna and the other volcanoes. Babylon has eaten a destroyer mountain, a very tower; but it shall be a burnt mountain, it shall at length have consumed itself, and shall remain a heap of ashes—so will this world be and is, and shall be at the end of the world. Again, (v. 33.) Babylon is like a threshing-floor, in which the people of God have been long threshed, as sheaves in the floor; but now the time is come that she shall herself be threshed, and her sheaves in her: her princes and great men, and all her habitants, shall be beaten in their own land, as in the threshing-floor. The threshing-floor is prepared, Babylon is by sin made meet to be a seat of war, and her people, like corn in harvest, are ripe for destruction, Rev. xiv. 15. Mic. iv. 12. (3.) It is an unavoidable destruction. Babylon seems to be well fenced and fortified against it; she dwells upon many waters; (v. 13.) the situation of her country is such, that it seems inaccessible, it is so surrounded, and the march of an enemy into it so embarrassed, by rivers. In allusion to this, the prophet speaks of Babylon in the book of Ezekiel, as cut off by the waters, to rule over many nations, as the other Babylon did, Rev. xviii. 15. Babylon is abundant in treasures; and yet thine end is come, and neither thy waters nor thy wealth shall secure thee. This end that comes shall be the measure of thy covetousness, it shall be the stint of thy gettings, it shall set bounds to thine ambition and avarice, which destruction of Babylon, said to its proud waves, Hitherto shall ye come, and no further. Note, If men will not set a measure to their covetousness by wisdom and grace, God will set a measure to it by his judgments. Babylon, thinking herself very safe and very great, was very proud, but she will be deceived, v. 53. Though Babylon should mount her wall, and build up her towers, and make her rampart, as high as what is high is apt to totter she should take care to fortify the height of her strength, yet all will not do, God will send spoilers against her, that shall break through her strength, and bring down her height. (4.) It is a gradual destruction, which, if they had pleased, they might have foreseen, and had warning of; for, (v. 46.) A rumour will come one year, that Cyrus is making vast preparations for war, and after that, in another year, shall come a rumour, that his design is upon Babylon, and he is steering his course that way; so that when he was a great way off, they might have sent, and desired conditions of peace; but they were too proud, too secure, to do that, and their hearts were hardned to their destruction. (5.) Yet, when it comes, it is a surprising destruction; Babylon is suddenly fallen; (v. 6.) the destruction comes upon them when they did not think of it, and is perfected in a little time, as that of the New Testament Babylon in one hour, Rev. xviii. 17. The king of Babylon, who should have been observing the approaches of the enemy, was himself at such a distance from the place where the attack was made, that it was a great while ere he had notice that the city was taken; that they sent one messenger, one courier, after another, with advice of it, v. 31. The foot-posts shall meet at the court from several quarters with this intelligence to the king of Babylon, that his city is taken at one end, and there is nothing to obstruct the progress of the conquerors, but they will be at the other end quickly. They are to tell him that the enemy has seized the passes, (v. 32.) the forts on blockades have captured the river; and that having got over the river, they set fire to the reeds on the river-side to alarm and terrify the city, so that all the men of war are affrighted, and have thrown down their arms, and surrendered at discretion. The messengers come, like Job's, one upon the heels of another, with these tidings, which are immediately confirmed with a vengeance, (v. 33.) the fort on blockades have captured the king himself, Dan. x. 30. That profane feast which they were celebrating at the very time when their city was taken, which was both an evidence of their strange security, and a great advantage to the enemy, seems here to be referred to; (v. 38, 39.) They shall roar together like lions, as men in their revels do, when the wine is got into their heads; they call it stugging, but in scripture-language, and in the language of sober men, it is called yelling like lions' whelps. It is probable that
they were drinking confusion to Cyrus and his army with loud huzzas; Well, says God, in their heat, when they are inflated. (Isa. v. 11.) and their heads are hot with their drink. I will make a fiery flame will give them their portion; they have passed their cup round, now the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto them, (Hab. ii. 15, 16.) a cup of fury, which shall make them drunk, that they may rejoice, or rather that they may revel it, and sleep a perpetual sleep let them be as merry as they can with that bitter cup, but it shall lay them to sleep, never to wake more: (v. 37.) for on the midst of the jollity, was Belshazzar slain. (6.) It is to be a universal destruction, God will make thorough work of it; for, as he will perform what he has purposed, so he will perfect what he has begun. The slain shall fall in great abundance throughout the land of the Chaldeans, multitudes shall be thrust through in her streets, v. 4. They are brought down like lambs to the slaughter, (v. 46.) in such great numbers, so easily; and the enemies make no more of killing them than the butcher does of killing lambs. The strength of the enemy, and their invading of them, are here compared to an irruption and inundation of waters; (v. 42.) The sea is come up upon Babylon, which, when it has once broken through its bounds, there is no fence against, so that she is covered with the multitude of her enemies; and her head is deluded by her army; her cities then become a desolation, an uninhabited, uncultivated desert, v. 43. (7.) It is a destruction that shall reach the gods of Babylon, the idols and images, and fall with a particular weight upon them. In token that the whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall, and that throughout all the country the wounded shall groan, I will punish Bel, that great desolator, (v. 52.) the image to which such abundance of sacrifices are offered, and such rich spoils dedicated, and to whose temple there is such a vast resort; he shall disgorge what he has so greedily regaled himself with; God will bring forth out of his temple all the wealth laid up there, Job xx. 15. His altars shall be forsaken, none shall regard him any more, and so that idol which was thought to be a wall to Babylon, shall fall, and fall them. (8.) It shall be a final destruction; you may take balm for her pain, but in vain; she that would not be healed by the word of God, shall not be healed by his providence, v. 8. 9. Babylon shall become heaps, (v. 37.) and to complete its infamy, no use shall be made even of the ruins of Babylon, so execrable shall they be, and so obnoxious it is to be taken. (9.) There shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations. People shall not care for having any thing to do with Babylon, or whatever belonged to it. Or it denotes that there shall be nothing left in Babylon, on which to ground any hopes or attempts of raising it into a kingdom again; for, as it follows here, it shall be desolate, and never be inhabited. v. 19. Though the ruins of Babylon's wall were to be seen, yet the ground enclosed by them was a forest of wild beasts. 9. Here is a call to God's people to go out of Babylon. It is their wisdom, when ruin is approaching, to quit the city, and retire into the country; (v. 6.) "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and get into some remote corner, that you may save your lives, and may not be cut off in her iniquity." When God's judgments are abroad, it is good to get as far as we can from those against whom they are leveled, as Israel from the tents of Korah. This agrees with the speaking of the Lord as the Christ gone up to God. Here is a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem; Let them which be in Judea, flee to the mountains, Matth. xxiv. 16. It is their wisdom to get out of the midst of Babylon, lest they be involved, if not in her ruins, yet in her fears; (v. 45, 46.) Lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land. Though God has told them that Cyrus would be their deliverer, and Babylon's destruction their deliverance, yet he has told also, though in the peace thereof they should have peace, and therefore the alarms given to Babylon would put them into a fright, and perhaps they might not have faith and consideration enough to suppress these fears; for which reason they are here advised to get out of the hearing of the alarms. Note, These who have not grace enough to keep their temper in temptation, should have wisdom enough to keep out of the way of temptation. But this is not all; it is not only their wisdom to quit the city when the ruin is approaching, but it is their duty to quit the country too, when the ruin is accomplished, and they are set at liberty by the pulling down of the prison over their heads. This they are told, v. 50, 51. "Ye Israelites, who have escaped the sword of the Chaldeans, your enemies, shall return, and destroyers, now that the year of release is come, go away, stand not still, hasten to your own country again, however you may be comfortable seated in Babylon, for this is not your rest, but Canaan is." (1.) He puts them in mind of the inducements they had to return; "Remember the Lord afar off, his presence with you now, though you are here afar off from your native soil, and your persons formerly in the temple, though you are now afar off from the ruins of it." Note, Whenever we are, in the greatest depths, at the greatest distances, we may and must remember the Lord our God; and in the time of the greatest fears and hopes it is seasonable to remember the Lord. "And let Jerusalem come into your mind; though it be now in ruins, yet favour its dust," (Ps. c. 14.) though few of you saw it, yet may God direct and use your remembrance concerning it, from these thoughts when they remembered Zion; and think of Jerusalem until you come up to a resolution to make the best of your way thither." Note, When the city of our solemnities is out of sight, yet it must not be out of mind; and it will be of great use to us, in our journey through this world, to let the heavenly Jerusalem come often into our mind. (2.) He takes notice of the discouragement which the returning captives laboured under; (v. 51.) being reminded of Jerusalem, they cry out, "We are confounded, we cannot bear the thought of it, shame covers our faces at the mention of it, for we have heard of the reproach of the sanctuary, that it is profaned and ruined by strangers; now how do these thoughts strike you?" which he answers, (v. 52.) that the God of Israel will give triumph over the gods of Babylon, and so that reproach will be for ever rolled away. Note, The believing prospect of Jerusalem's recovery will keep us from being ashamed of Jerusalem's ruins. 10. Here is the diversified feeling excited by Babylon's fall, and it is the same that we have with respect to the destruction of the temple. (1.) Some shall lament the destruction of Babylon. There is the sound of a cry, a great outcry coming from Babylon, (v. 54.) lamenting this great destruction, the voice of mourning, because the Lord has destroyed the voice of the multitude, that great voice of mirth, which used to be heard in Babylon, v. 55. We are told what they shall say in their lamentations; (v. 41.) How is Shushah taken, and
how are we mistaken concerning her! How is that city surprised, and become an astonishment among the nations, that was the praise, and glory, and admiration, of the whole earth! See how that may fall into a general contempt, which has been universally cried up! (2.) Yet some shall rejoice in Babylon's fall, not as it is the misery of their fellow-creatures, but as it is the manifestation of the righteous judgment of God, and as it opens the way for the release of God's captives; upon these accounts the heaven and the earth, and all that is in both, shall sing for Babylon; (v. 48.) the church in heaven and the church on earth shall give to God the glory of his righteousness, and take notice of it with thankfulness to his praise. Babylon's ruin is Zion's praise.

39. The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Ne riah, the son of Maaseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah into Babylon, in the fourth year of his reign. And this Seraiah was a quiet prince. 60. So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, even all these words that are written against Babylon. 61. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words, 62. Then shalt thou say, O Lord, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever. 63. And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: 64. And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her, and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.

We have been long attending the judgment of Babylon, in this and the foregoing chapter; now here we have the conclusion of that whole matter.

1. A copy is taken of this prophecy, it should seem, by Jeremiah himself, for Baruch his scribe is not mentioned here; (v. 60.) Jeremiah wrote in a book all these words that are here written against Babylon. He received this notice, that he might give it to all whom it might concern. It is of great advantage both to the propagating, and to the perpetuating, of the word of God, to have it written, and to have copies taken of the law, prophets, and epistles.

2. It is sent to Babylon, to the captives there, by the hand of Seraiah, who went there attendant on, or as the leader for the king; for the fourth year of his reign, v. 59. He went with Zedekiah, or, as the margin reads it, on the behalf of Zedekiah, into Babylon. The character given of him is observable. That this Seraiah was a quiet prince, a prince of rest; he was in honour and power, but not, as most of the princes then were, hot and heady, making parties, and heading factions, and driving things furiously; he was of a calm temper, mr. studied the things that made for peace, endeavoured to preserve a good understanding between the king his master and the king of Babylon, and to keep his master from rebelling; he was no persecutor of God's prophets, but a moderate man. Zedekiah was happy in the choice of such a man to be his envoy to the king of Babylon, and Jeremiah might safely intrust such a man with his errand too. Note, It is the real honour of great men to be quiet men, and it is the wisdom of princes to put such into places of trust.

3. Seraiah is desired to read it to his countrymen that were already gone into captivity: 'When thou shalt come to Babylon, and shalt see what a magnificent place it is, how large a city, how strong, how rich, and how well fortified, and shall therefore be tempted to think, Surely it will stand for ever;' (as the disciples did when Zedekiah, the son of the prince, concluded that nothing would throw them down but the end of the world, Matt. xxiv. 13.) 'then thou shalt read all these words to thyself, and thy particular friends, for their encouragement in their captivity: let them with an eye of faith see to the end of these threatening powers, and comfort themselves and one another herewith.' He is directed to make a solemn protestation of the divine authority and unquestionable certainty of that which he had read; (v. 62.) Then thou shalt look up to God, and say, O Lord, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off. This is like the angel's protestation concerning the destruction of the New Testament Babylon; These are the true sayings of God. These words are true and faithful, Rev. xix. 9.—xx. 5. Though Seraiah sees Babylon flourishing, he is not to be deceived; he must foresee Babylon falling; and by virtue of it, must curse its habitation, though it be taking root; (Job v. 3.) 'O Lord, thou hast spoken against this place, and I believe what thou hast spoken, that, as thou knowest every thing, so thou canst do every thing. Thou hast passed sentence upon Babylon, and it shall be executed. Thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, and direct us to it; we will not endure its pomp, nor fear its power.' Whereunto I have said, that this world is, how glittering its shows are, and how flattering its proposals, let us read in the book of the Lord that its fashion passes away, and it shall shortly be cut off, and be desolate for ever, and we shall learn to look upon it with a holy contempt. Observe here, When we have been reading the word of God, it becomes us to direct to him whose word it is, to pondering on the wonderful, the admirable, the beautiful, the true, the equity, and the goodness, of what we have read.

5. He must then tie a stone to the book, and throw it into the midst of the river Euphrates, as a confirming sign of the things contained in it, saying, 'Thus shall Babylon sink, and not rise; for they shall be weary, they shall perfectly succumb, as men tired with a burden, under the load of the evil day I will bring upon them, which they shall never shake off, or get from under, v. 63, 64. In the sign, it was the stone that sunk the book, which otherwise would have swam, but in the thing signified, it was rather the book that sunk the stone; it was the divine sentence passed upon Babylon in this prophecy, that sunk that city, which seemed as firm as a stone. The fall of the New Testament Babylon was represented by something like this, but much more considerable; there was to be a mighty angel cast a great millstone into the sea, saying, Thus shall Babylon fall. Those that sink under the weight of God's wrath and curse, sink irrecoverably. The last words of the chapter seal up the vision and prophecy of this book; Thus far are the words of Jeremiah. Not that this prophecy against Babylon was the last of his prophecies, for it was dated in the fourth year of Zedekiah, (as we shall see) before he finished his testimony; but this is recorded last of his prophecies, because it was to be last accomplished of all his prophecies against the Gentiles, ch. xlvii. 1. And the chapter which remains is purely historical, and, as some think, was added by some other hand.
CHAP. LII.

History is the best expositor of prophecy; and, therefore, for the better understanding the prophecies of this book, which relate to the destruction of Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah, we are here furnished with an account of that event, in the same words in the history we had, 2 Kings xxiv. 25. and many of the particulars we had before in that book, but the matter is here repeated, and put together, to give light to the book of the Lamentations, which follows next, and to serve as a key to it. That article in the close, concerning the advancement of Jehoiakim in his captivity, which happened after Jeremiah's time, gives colour to their conjecture, who suppose this chapter was not written by Jeremiah himself, but by some man divinely inspired among those in captivity, for a constant memorandum to those who in Babylon preferred Jerusalem above their chief joy. In this chapter, we have, 1. The destruction of the city, v. 1-14. 2. The captivity of the people, (v. 15, 16.) and the numbers of those that were carried away into captivity, v. 28, 29. 3. The carrying off the plunder of the temple, v. 17, 29. 4. The slaying of Zedekiah, and some other great men in cold blood, v. 24, 27. 5. The better days which king Jehoiakim lived to see in the latter end of his days, after the death of Nebuchadrezzar, v. 31, 34.

1. ZEDEKIAH was one and twenty years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 2. And he did that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. 3. For through the anger of the Lord it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, till he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. 4. And it came to pass, in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about. 5. So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. 6. And in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land. 7. Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden; (now the Chaldeans were by the city round about;) and they went by the way of the plain. 8. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him. 9. Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah, in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him. 10. And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Ju-
good their posts, but were rendered wholly unserviceable; and then no wonder that the city was broken up, v. 7. Walls, in such a case, will not hold out long without men, any more than men without walls; nor will both together stand people in any stead without God and his protection.

4. The inglorious retreat of the king and his mighty men. They got out of the city by night, (v. 7.) and made the best of their way, I know not whither, nor perhaps they themselves; but the king was overtaken by the pursuers in the plains of Jericho, and his guards dispersed, and all his army scattered from him, v. 8. His fright was not caused, for where there is guilt there will be fear in time of danger. But his flight was fruitless, for there is no escaping of the judgments of God; they will come upon the sinner, and will overtake him, let him flee where he will; (Deut. xxxvii. 15.) and these judgments particularly that are here executed, were there threatened, v. 52, 53, &c.

5. The sad doom past upon Zedekiah by the king of Babylon, and immediately put in execution. He treated him as a rebel, gave judgment upon him, v. 9. One cannot think of it without the utmost vexation and regret, that a king, a king of Judah, a king of the house of David, should be arraigned as a criminal at the bar of this heathen king. But he humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet; therefore God thus humbled him. Pursuant to the sentence passed upon him by the hand of the feared conqueror, his sons were slain before his eyes, and all the princesses of Judah; (v. 10.) then his eyes were put out, and he was bound in chains, carried in triumph to Babylon; perhaps they made sport with him as they did with Samson when his eyes were put out; however, he was condemned to perpetual imprisonment, wearing out the remainder of his life (I cannot say his days, for he saw day no more) in darkness and misery; he was kept in prison till the day of his death, but had some honour done him at his funeral, ch. xxxiv. 5. Jeremiah had often told him what it would come to, but he would not take warning when he might have prevented it.

12. Now in the fifth month, in the tenth day of the month, (which was the nineteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon,) came Nebuzar-aden captain of the guard, which served the king of Babylon, into Jerusalem, 13. And burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great men, burnt he with fire. 14. And all the army of the Chaldeans, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down all the walls of Jerusalem round about. 15. Then Nebuzar-aden the captain of the guard carried away captive certain of the poor of the people, and the residue of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the multitude. 16. But Nebuzar-aden the captain of the guard left certain of the poor of the land, for vine-dressers and for husbandmen.

17. Also the pillars of brass that were in the house of the Lord, and the bases, and the brazen sea that was in the house of the Lord, the Chaldeans brake, and carried all the brass of them to Babylon.
nuces of the temple. All that were of great value were carried away before, the vessels of silver and gold, yet some of that sort remained, which were now carried away, v. 19. But most of the temple- prey that was now seized, was of brass; which, being of less value, was carried off last. When the gold was gone, the brass soon went after, because the people repented not, according to Jeremiah's prediction, ch. xxvii. 19, &c. When the walls of the city were demolished, the pillars of the temple were pulled down too, and both in token that God, who was the Strength and Stay both of their civil and their ecclesiastical government, was departed from them. No walls can protect nor pillars sustain those, from whom God withdraws. These pillars of the temple were not for support, (for there was nothing built upon them,) but for ornament and significance. They were called Jacobin, He will establish; and Boaz, In him is strength so that the breaking of these signified that God would no longer establish his house, nor be the Strength of it. These pillars are here very particularly described, (v. 21.—23. from 1 Kings vii. 13.) that the extraordinary beauty and statelyness of them may affect us the more with the demolishing of them. All the vessels that belonged to the brazen altar were carried away: for the majesty of Jerusalem, like that of Eli's house, was not to be purged by sacrifice or offering, 1 Sam. iii. 14. It is said, (v. 26.) The brasse of all these vessels was without weight; so it was in the making of them, (1 Kings vii. 47.) the weight of the brass was not then found out, (2 Chron. iv. 18.) and so it was in the destroying of them. Those that made great spoil of them did not stand to weigh them, as purchasers do, for whatever they weighed it was all their own.

24. And the captain of the guard took Seraijah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door: 25. He took also out of the city a cuncheon which had the charge of the men of war; and seven men of them that were near the king's person, which were found in the city; and the principal scribe of the host, who mustered the people of the land; and threescore men of the people of the land, that were found in the midst of the city. 26. So Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah. 27. And the king of Babylon smote them, and put them to death in Riblah, in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive out of his own land. 28. This is the people whom Nebuchadrezzar carried away captive: In the seventh year, three thousand Jews and three and twenty: 29. In the eighth year of Nebuchadrezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred thirty and two persons: 30. In the three and twentieth year of Nebuchadrezzar, Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred forty and five persons: all the persons were four thousand and six hundred.

We have here a very melancholy account,

1. Of the slaughter of some great men, in cold blood, at Riblah, seventy-two in number, (according to the number of the elders of Israel, Numb. xii. 26, 27.) so they are counted, 2 Kings xxv. 18, 19. We read there of five out of the temple and the city, five out of the court, and sixty out of the country. The account here agrees with that, except in one article; there, it is said that there were five, here, there were seven, of those that were near the king; which Dr. Lightfoot reconciles thus, that he took away seven of those that were near the king, but two of them were Jeremiah himself and Eleazar-melech, which four he had before read of, so that there were only five of them put to death, and so the number was reduced to seventy-two; some of all ranks, for they had all corrupted their way; and it is probable that such were made examples of, as had been most forward to excite and promote the rebellion against the king of Babylon. Seraijah the chief priest is put first, whose sacred character could not exempt him from this stroke; how should it, when he himself had profaned it by sin? Seraijah the prince was a quiet prince, (ch. lxi. 59.) but perhaps Seraijah the priest was not so, but unquiet and turbulent, by which he had made himself obnoxious to the king of Babylon. The leaders of this company had caused them to err, and now they are in a particular manner made monuments of their fall and punishment.

2. Of the captivity of the rest. Come, and see how Judah was carried away captive out of his own land, (v. 27.) and how it spewed out the Canaanites that went before them, which God had told them it would certainly do, if they trod in their steps, and copied out their abominations, Lev. xviii. 28. Now here is an account, (v. 14—18.) Of two captivities which we had an account of before, one in the seventh year of Nebuchadrezzar, the same with that which is said to be in his eighth year, (2 Kings xxiv. 12.) another in his eighteenth year, the same with that which is said (v. 12.) to be in his nineteenth year. But the sums here are very small, in comparison with what we find expressed concerning the former, (2 Kings xxiv. 14, 16.) when there was 18,000 carried captive, whereas here they are said to be 3025; small too in comparison with what we may reasonably suppose concerning the latter; for when all the residue of the people were carried away, (v. 15.) one would think there should be more than 832 souls; therefore Dr. Lightfoot conjectures that these accounts being joined to the story of the putting to death of the great men at Riblah, all that are here said to be carried away, cannot be set down as nothing.

(1.) Of a third captivity, not mentioned before, which was in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadrezzar, four years after the destruction of Jerusalem; (v. 30.) then Nebuzar-adan came, and carried away 745 Jews; it is probable that this was done in revenge of the murder of Gedaliah, which was another rebellion against the king of Babylon, and that those who were murderers were amongst the abettors of Ishmael in that murder, and were not only carried away, but put to death, for it; yet this is uncertain. If this be the sum total of the captives, (All the persons were 4600, v. 30.) we may see how strangely they were reduced from what they had been, and may wonder as much how much they came to so numerous again, as afterward we find them; for it should be observed, as at first it is said in Babylon, the Lord made them fruitful in the land of their affliction, and the more they were oppressed the more they multiplied. And the truth is, this people were often miracles both of judgment and mercy.

31. And it came to pass, in the seventh and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the
five and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison, 32. And spake kindly unto him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon, 33. And changed his prison-garments; and he did continually eat bread before him all the days of his life. 34. And for his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion, until the day of his death, all the days of his life.

This passage of story concerning the reviving which king Jehoiachin had in his bondage, we had likewise before, 2 Kings xxv. 27.—30. Only there it is said to be done on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month, here on the twenty-fifth; but in a thing of this nature, two days make a very slight difference in the account. It is probable that the orders were given for his release on the twenty-fifth day, but that he was not presented to the king till the twenty-seventh. We may observe in this story,

1. That new lords make new laws. Nebuchadnezzar had long kept this unhappy prince in prison; and his son, though well-affecting to the prisoner, could not procure him any favour, not one smile, from his father; any more than Jonathan could for David from his father; but when the old peevish man was dead, his son countenanced Jehoiachin, and made him a favourite. It is common for children to unde what their fathers have done; it were well if it were always as much for the better as this here.

2. That the world we live in is a changing world. Jehoiachin, in his beginning, fell from a throne into a prison, but here he is advanced again to a throne of state, (v. 32.) though not to a throne of power. As, before, the robes were changed into prison-garments, so, now, they were converted into robes again. Such chequer-work is this world; prosperity and adversity are set the one over against the other, that we may learn to rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and weep as though we wept not.

3. That though the night of affliction be very long, yet we must not despair but that the day may dawn at last. Jehoiachin was thirty-seven years a prisoner; in confinement, in contempt, ever since he was eighteen years old, in which time we may suppose him so inured to captivity, that he had forgotten the sweets of liberty; or rather, that after so long an imprisonment it would be doubly welcome to him. Let those whose afflictions have been lengthened out, encourage themselves with this instance; the vision will at the end speak comfortably, and therefore wait for it. Dum spiro spero—While there is life, there is hope. Non si male nunc, et olim sic erit—Though now we suffer, we shall not always suffer.

4. That God can make his people to find favour in the eyes of those that are their oppressors, and unaccountably turn their hearts to pity them, according to that word, (Ps. cxv. 46.) He made them to be fitted of all those that carried them captives. He can bring those that have spoken roughly to speak kindly, and those to feed his people that have fed upon them. Those therefore that are under oppression will find that it is not in vain to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord. Therefore our times are in God's hand, because the hearts of all we deal with are so.

And now, upon the whole matter, comparing the prophecy and the history of this book together, we may learn, in general, (1.) That it is no new thing for churches and persons highly dignified to degenerate, and become very corrupt. (2.) That iniquity tends to the ruin of those that harbour it; and if it be not repented of and forsaken, will certainly end in their ruin. (3.) That external professions and privileges will not only not amount to an excuse for sin, and an exemption from ruin, but will be a very great aggravation of both. (4.) That no word of God shall fall to the ground, but the event will fully answer the prediction; and the unbelief of man shall not make God's threatenings, any more than his promises, of no effect. The justice and truth of God are here written in bloody characters, for the conviction or the confusion of all those that make a jest of his threatenings. Let them not be deceived; God is not mocked.