AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE

LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH.

Since what Solomon says, though contrary to the common opinion of the world, is certainly true, that Sor-
row is better than laughter, and, It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of festing,
we should come to the reading and consideration of the melancholy chapters of this book, not only willingly,
but with an expectation to edify ourselves by them; which that we may do, we must compose ourselves
to a holy sadness, and resolve to weep with the weeping prophet. Let us consider,

I. The title of this book; in the Hebrew it has none, but is called, (as the books of Moses are,) from the
first word, Eccal—How; but the Jewish commentators call it, as the Greeks do, and we from them,
Kinoth—Lamentations. As we have sacred odes or songs of joy, so have we sacred elegies or songs of
lamentation; such variety of methods has Infinite Wisdom taken to work upon us, and move our affec-
tions, and so soften our hearts, and make them susceptible of the impressions of divine truths, as the
wax of the seal. We have not only filled unto you, but have mourned likewise, Matth. xi. 17.

II. The penman of this book; it was Jeremiah the prophet, who is here Jeremiah the poet, and water sig-
nifies both; therefore this book is fitly adjoined to the book of his prophecy, and is as an appendix to it.
We had there at large the predictions of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, and then the history
of them, to show how punctually the predictions were accomplished, for the confirming of our faith:
now here we have the expressions of his sorrow upon occasion of them, to show that he was very sin-
cere in the protestations he had oft made, that he did not desire the woful day, but that, on the con-
trary, the prospect of it filled him with bitterness. When he saw these calamities at a distance, he
wished his head waters, and his eyes fountains of tears; and when they came, he made it to appear
that he did not dissemble in that wish, and that he was far from being disaffected to his country,
which was the crime his enemies charged him with. Though his country had been very unkind to him,
and though the ruin of it was both a proof that he was a true prophet, and a punishment of them for
prosecuting him as a false prophet, which would have tempted him to rejoice in it, yet he sadly lamented
it, and herein showed a better temper than that which Jonah was of with respect to Nineveh.

III. The occasion of these Lamentations was the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldean
army, and the dissolution of the Jewish state both civil and ecclesiastical thereby. Some of the Rah-
bins will have these to be the Lamentations which Jeremiah penned upon occasion of the death of Jo-
siah, which are mentioned, 2 Chron. xxxv. 25. But though it is true that that opened the door to all
the following calamities, yet these Lamentations seem to be penned in the sight, not in the foresight,
of those calamities; when they were already come, not when they were at a distance; and there is nothing
of Josiah in them, and his praise, as was, no question, in the Lamentations for him. No, it is Jerusa-
lem's funeral that this is an elegy upon. Others of them will have these Lamentations to be contained
in the roll which Baruch wrote from Jeremiah's mouth, and which Jehoiakim burnt, and they suggest,
that at first there were in it only the 1st, 2d, and 4th chapters, but that the 3d and 5th were the many
like words that were afterward added; but this is a groundless fancy; that roll is expressly said to be a
repetition and summary of the prophet's sermons, Jer. xxxvi. 2.

IV. The composition of it: it is not only poetical, but alphabetical, all except the 5th chapter, as some of
David's psalms are; each verse begins with a several letter in the order of the Hebrew alphabet, the
1st aleph, the 2nd bet, &c. but the third chapter is a triple alphabet, the three first beginning with
aleph, the next with bet, &c. which was a help to memory, (it being designed that these mourn-
ful ditties should be got by heart,) and was an elegance in writing then valued, and therefore not now to
be despaired. They observe, that in the 3d, 5th, and 4th chapters, the letter je is put before ajm, which
in all the Hebrew alphabets follows it; for a reason of which Dr. Lightfoot offers this conjecture, That
the letter ajm, which is the numeral letter for LXX., was thus, by being displaced, made remarkable,
to put them in mind of the seventy years, at the end of which God would turn again their captivity.

V. The use of it: of great use, no doubt, it was to the pious Jews in their sufferings, furnishing them with
spiritual language to express their natural grief by; helping to preserve the lively remembrance of Zion
among them, and their children that never saw it, when they were in Babylon; directing their tears
into the right channel; for they are here taught to mourn for sin, and mourn to God; and withal en-
couraging their hopes, that God would yet return, and have mercy upon them; and it is of use to us, to
affect us with godly sorrow for the calamities of the church of God, as becomes those that are living
members of it, and are resolved to take our lot with it.
LAMENTATIONS.

We have here the first alphabet of this lamentation, twenty-two stanzas, in which the miseries of Jerusalem are bitterly bewailed, and her present deplorable condition, aggravated by comparing it with her former prosperous state; and, all along, sin is acknowledged and complained of as the procuring cause of all these miseries; and God is appealed to for justice against their enemies, and applied to for compassion toward them. The chapter is all of a piece, and the several remonstrances are interwoven; but here is, I. A complaint made to God of their calamities, and his just righteous consideration of them, ver. 1-11. II. The same complaint made to their friends, and their compassionate consideration desired, ver. 12-17. III. An appeal to God and his righteousness concerning it, (v. 18-22,) in which he is justified in their affliction, and is humbly solicited to justify himself in their deliverance.

I. HOW doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary! 2. She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks; among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they are become her enemies. 3. Judah is gone into captivity, because of affliction, and because of great servitude; she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits. 4. The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate; her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness. 5. Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper; for the Lord hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy. 6. And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed: her princes are become like harts that find no pasture; and they are gone without strength before the pursuer. 7. Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction, and of her miseries, all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her: the adversaries saw her, and did mock at her sabbaths. 8. Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed: all that honoured her despised her, because they have seen her nakedness: yea, she sighed, and turned backward. 9. Her filthiness is in her skirts; she remembereth not her last end; therefore she came down wonderfully: she had no comforter. O Lord, behold my affliction, for the enemy hath magnified himself. 10. The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things: for she hath seen that the heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thy congregation. 11. All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul: see, O Lord, and consider; for I am become vile.

Those that have any disposition to weep with them that weep, one would think, should scarcely be able to refrain from tears at the reading these verses, so very pathetic are the lamentations here.

I. The miseries of Jerusalem are here complained of as very pressing, and by many circumstances very much aggravated. Let us take a view of these miseries.

1. As to their civil state.

(1.) A city that was populous, is now depopulated, v. 1. It is spoken of by way of wonder; Who would have thought that ever it should come to this! Or by way of inquiry; What is it that has brought it to this? Or by way of lamentation; Alas, alas, (as Rev. xviii. 10, 16, 19,) how doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! She was full of her own people that replenished her, and full of the people of other nations that resorted to her, with whom she had both profitable commerce and pleasant converse; but now her own people are carried into captivity, and strangers make no court to her; she sits solitary. The chief places of the city are not now, as they used to be, places of concourse, where Wisdom cried; (Prov. i. 20, 21,) and justly are they left unvisited, because Wisdom's cry is now no more heard. Note, Those that are ever so much increased, God can soon diminish.

How is she become as a widow! Her king that was, or should have been, as a husband to her, is cut off, and gone; her God is departed from her, and has given her a bill of divorce; she is emptied of her children, is solitary and sorrowful as a widow. Let no family, no state, nor Jerusalem, no, nor Babylon herself, be secure; and say, I sit as a queen, and shall never sit as a widow. Isa. lxvii. 8. Rev. xviii. 7.

(2.) A city that had dominion, is now in subjection. She had been great among the nations, greatly loved by some, and greatly feared by others, and greatly observed and obeyed by both; some made her presents, and others paid her taxes; so that she was really princess among the provinces, and every sheaf bowed to her, even the princes of the people that went into her favours but now the tables are turned, she has not only lost her friends, and sits solitary, but has lost her freedom too, and sits tributary; she paid tribute to Egypt first, and then to Babylon. Note, Sin brings a people not only into solitude but into slavery.

(3.) A city that used to be full of mirth, is now become melancholy, and upon all accounts full of grief. Jerusalem had been a joyous city, whither the tribes went up on purpose to rejoice before the Lord; she was the joy of the whole earth, but now she weeps sore, her laughter is turned into mourning, her solemn feasts are all gone; she weeps in the night, as true mourners do who weep in secret, in silence and solitude; in the night, when others compose themselves to rest, her thoughts are most intent upon her troubles, and grief then plays the tyrant. What the prophet's hand was for her, when she regarded it not, now her head is—as waters, and her eyes fountains of tears, so that she weeps day and night, (Jer. ix. 1,) her tears are continually on her cheeks. Though nothing dries away sooner than a tear, yet fresh griefs extort fresh tears, so that her cheeks are never free from them.

Note, There is nothing more commonly seen under the heavens, than the tears of a woman; a woman whom the clouds return after the rain, Ezch. iv. 1.

(4.) Those that were separated from the heathen, now dwell among the heathen; those that were a peculiar people, are now a mingled people; (v. 3.) Judah is gone into captivity, out of her own land
into the land of her enemies, and there she abides, and is likely to abide, among those that are aliens to God and the covenants of promise, with whom she foundeth no rest, no satisfaction of mind, nor any settlement of abode, but is continually hurried from place to place at the will of the victorious, impious tyrants. And again, (v. 5.) Her children were carried away captive with her to Babylon: they were to have been the seed of the next generation, are carried off; so that the land that is now desolate, is likely to be still desolate and lost for want of heirs. Those that dwell among their own people, and that free people, and in their own land, would be more thankful for the mercies they thereby enjoy, if they would but consider the miseries of those that are forced to dwell among enemies.

(3.) Those that used in their wars to conquer, are now conquered and triumphed over: All her persecutors overtook her between the straits; (v. 3.) they gained all possible advantages against her, so that her people unavoidably fell into the hand of the enemy, for there was no way to escape, (v. 7.) they were hemmed in on every side, and which way soever they attempted to flee, they found themselves embarrassed; and when they made the best of their way, they could make nothing of it, but were overthrown and overcome; and so that every where her adversaries are the chief, and her enemies forsother; (v. 5.) which way soever their sword turns, they get the better. Such straits do men bring themselves into by sin! If we allow that which is our greatest adversary and enemy to have dominion over us, and to be chief in us, justly will all other enemies be suffered to have dominion over us.

(6.) Those that had been not only a distinguished but a dignified people, on whom God had put honour, and to whom all their neighbours had paid respect, are now brought into contempt; (v. 8.) All that honoured her before, despise her; those that counted an alliance with her, now value it not; those that cherished her when she was in pomp and prosperity, slight her now that she is in distress, because they have seen her nakedness. By the prevalence of the enemies against her they perceive her weakness, and that she is not so strong a people as they thought she had been; and by the prevalence of God's judgments against her they perceive her wickedness, which now comes to light, and is everywhere to be seen: now it appears how they conspired against themselves by their sins; the enemies magnify themselves against them, (v. 9.) they trample upon them, and insult over them, and in their eyes they are become vile; the tale of the nations, though once they were the head. Note, Sin is the reproach of all people.

(7.) Those that lived in a fruitful land were reft, despoiled, and many of them did perish, for want of necessary food; (v. 11.) All her people sigh in despondency and despair, they are ready to faint away, their spirits fail, and therefore they sigh, for they seek bread, and seek it in vain. They were brought at last to that extremity, that there was no bread for the people of the land; (Jer. iii. 6.) and in their captivity they had much ado to get bread, ch. v. 5. They have given their pleasant things, their jewels and pictures, and all the furniture of their closets and cabinets, which they used to please themselves with looking upon, they have sold these, to buy bread for themselves and their families, have parted with them for meat to relieve the soul, or, as the margin is, to make the soul come again, when they were ready to faint away. They desired no other commodities but what they had, he give for life, and for bread which is the staff of life. Let those that abound in pleasant things, not be proud of them, or fond of them, for the time may come when they may be glad to let them go for necessary things. And let those that have competent food to relieve their soul, be content with it, and thankful for it, though they have not pleasant things.

2. We have here an account of their miseries in their ecclesiastical state, the ruin of their sacred interest, which was much more to be lamented than that of their body. (1.) Their religious feasts were no more observed, no more frequented; (v. 4.) The ways of Zion do mourn, they look melancholy, overgrown with grass and weeds. It used to be a pleasant diversion to see people continually passing and repassing in the high way that led to the temple, but now you may stand there long enough, and see nobody stir, for fear of meeting with some of her neighbours whom she has brought in by the destruction of that which was the city of our solemnities, Isa. xxxiii. 20. The solemn Feasts had been neglected and profaned, (Isa. i. 11, 12.) and therefore justly is an end now put to them. But when thus the ways of Zion are made to mourn, all the sons of Zion cannot but mourn with them. It is very grievous to good men to see religious assemblies broken up and scattered, and those restrained from them, that would gladly attend them. And as the ways of Zion mourned, so the gates of Zion, in which the faithful worshippers used to meet, are desolate, for there is none to meet in them.

Time was when the Lord loved the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob, but now he has forsaken them, and is provoked to withdraw from them, and therefore it is but fair with them as it did with the temple when Christ quitted it. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate, Matt. xxiii. 38.

(2.) Their religious persons were quite disabled to perform their wondrous services, were quite dispirited; Her priests sigh for the desolations of the temple, their songs are turned into sighs; they sigh, for they have nothing to do, and therefore there is nothing to be had; they sigh, as the people, (v. 11,) for want of bread, because the offerings of the Lord, which were their livelihood, failed. It is time to sigh when the priests, the Lord's ministers, sigh. Her virgins also, that used, with their music and dancing, to grace the solemnities of their feasts, are afflicted and in heaviness. Notice is taken of their service in the day of Zion's prosperity, (Ps. lxi.) Her priests shall be clothed with sackcloth, and Her virgins with sackcloth and with lamentations, and therefore notice is taken of the failing of it now. Her virgins are afflicted, and therefore she is in bitterness; all the inhabitants of Zion are so, whose character it is, that they are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and that to them the reproach of it is a burthen, Zeph. iii. 18.

(3.) Their religious places were profaned; (v. 18.) The house entered into her sanctuary, into the temple itself, into which no Israelite was permitted to enter, though ever so reverently and devoutly, but the priests only. The stranger that comes nigh, even to worship there, shall be put to death. Thither the heathen now crowd rudely in, to worship, but to plunder. God had commanded that the heathers should not so much as enter into the gates of the Jews; (Deut. xxxiii. 5.) yet now they enter into the sanctuary without control. Note, Nothing is more grievous to those who have a true concern for the glory of God, nor is more lamented, than the violation of God's laws, and the contempt they see put upon sacred things. What the enemy did wickedly in the sanctuary, was complained of, Psa. cvi. 16.
(v. 10.) The adversary has spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things, has grasped them all, seized them all, for himself. What these pleasant things are, we may learn from Isa. lxiv. 11. where, to the complaint of the burning of the temple, it is added, All our pleasant things are laid waste; the ark and the altar, and all the other tokens of God's presence with them, these were their pleasant things above any other things, and these were now broken to pieces, and carried away. Thus from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed, v. 6. The beauty of holiness was the beauty of the daughter of Zion; when the temple, that holy and beautiful house, was destroyed, her beauty was gone; that was the breaking of the staff of beauty, the taking away of the pledges and seals of the covenant, Zech. xli. 10. 5.) Their religious days were made a jest of; (v. 7.) The adversaries saw her, and did mock at her sabbaths. They laughed at them for their observing of one day in seven, as a day of rest from worldly business. Juvenal, a heathen poet, ridicules the Jews in his time for losing a seventh part of their time;—

Cui septima quepusq; fatet
Incareri ut pace et in pace
Et pace et omne altam—
They keep their sabbaths to their cost,
For thus one day in seven is lost;

whereas sabbaths, if they be sanctified as they ought to be, will turn to a better account than all the days of the week besides. And whereas the Jews professed that they did it in obedience to their God, and to his honour, their adversaries asked them, "What do you get by it now? that you have you in keeping the ordinances of your God, who now deserts you in your distress?" Note, It is a very great trouble to all that love God, to hear his ordinances mocked at, and particularly his sabbaths. Zion calls them her sabbaths, for the sabbath was made for men; they are his institutions, but they are her privileges; and the contempt put upon sabbaths all the sons of Zion take to themselves, and lay to heart accordingly; nor will they look upon sabbaths, or any other divine ordinances, as less honourable, nor value them less for their being mocked at.

(6.) That which greatly aggrieved all these grievances, was, that her present state was just the reverse of what it had been once; (v. 7.) Now, in the days of affliction and misery, when every thing was black and drear, she remembers all her terrors and sorrows, which she had in the days of old, and now knows how to value them better than formerly, when she had the full enjoyment of them. God often makes us know the worth of mercies by the want of them: and adversity is most hardly borne by those that are fallen into it from the height of prosperity. This cut David to the heart, when he was banished from God's ordinances, that he could remember them only with the multitude to the house of God, Ps. xliii. 4.

II. The sins of Jerusalem are here complained of as the procuring, provoking cause of all these calamities. Whosoever are the instruments, God is the Author, of all these troubles; it is the Lord that has afflicted her, (v. 5.) and he has done it as a righteous Judge, for she has sinned.

1. Her sins are very numberless. Are her troubles many? Her sins are many more. It is for the multitude of her transgressions that the Lord has afflicted her. See Jer. xxxix. 14. When the transgressions of a people are multiplied, we cannot say, as Job does, in his own case, that wounds are multiplied without cause, Job xix. 17.

2. They are for nature exceeding heinous; (v. 8.) Jerusalem has grievously sinned; has sinned sin, so the word is; sinned wilfully, deliberately; has sinned that sin, which of all others is the abominable thing that the Lord hates, the sin of idolatry. The sins of Jerusalem, that makes such a profession, and enjoys such privileges, are of all others the most grievous sins. She has sinned grievously, (v. 8.) and therefore (v. 9.) she came down wonderfully. Notice, Grievous sins bring wondrous ruin; there are some workers of iniquity, to whom there is a strange punishment, Job xxxi. 5.

3. There are such sins as may plainly be read in the punishment. (1.) They have been very oppressive, and therefore justly oppressed; (v. 5.) Judah is gone into captivity, and it is because of affliction and great servitude, because the rich among them afflicted the poor, and made them serve with rigor, and particularly (as the Chaldee paraphrases it,) because they had oppressed their Hebrew servants, which is charged upon them, Jer. xvi. 11. Oppression was one of their crying sins, (Jer. vi. 7.) and it is a sin that cries loud. (2.) They have made themselves vile, and therefore are justly vilified. They all despise her, (v. 8.) for her filthiness is in her skirts; it appears upon her garments, that she has rolled them in the mire of sin. None can stain our glory, if we did not stain ourselves. (3.) They have been very secure, and therefore justly surprised. There have been very fair promises, and they have been unfaithful to them; (v. 9.) She remembers not her last end; sh. did not take the warning that was given her, to consider her latter end, to consider what would be the end of such wicked courses as she took, and therefore she came down wonderfully, in an astonishing manner, that she might be made to feel what she would not fear therefore God shall make their plagues wonderful.

IV. Jerusalem's friends are here complained of as false and faint-hearted, and very unholy; They have all dealt treacherously with her, (v. 2.) so that, in effect, they are become her enemies. Her deceivers have created as much vexation as her destroyers. The staffs that breaks under us, may do us as great a mischief as the staffs that beats us, Ezek. xixi. 6, 7. Her princes, that should have protected her, have not courage enough to make head against the enemy for their own preservation; they are like harts, that, upon the first alarm, betake themselves to flight, and make no resistance; nay, they are like harts that are famished for want of pasture, and therefore are gone without strength before the pursuer, and, having no strength for flight, are soon run down, and made a prey of. Her neighbours are unmercifully, for, 1. There is none of the nations her nearest neighbours (v. 8.) that would not; nay, 2. She has no comforter, none to sympathize with her, or suggest any thing to alleviate her griefs; (v. 7, 9.) like Job's friends, they saw it was to no purpose, her grief was so great; and miserable comforters were they all in such a case.

12. Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger. 13. From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaleth against them: he hath spread a net
for my feet; he hath turned me back; he hath made me desolate and faint all the day. 14. The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand; they are wreathed, and come up upon my neck; he hath made my strength to fail; the Lord hath delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up. 15. The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty men in the midst of me; he hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men: the Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, as in a wine-press. 16. For these things I weep: mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me; my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed. 17. Zion spreadeth forth her hands, and there is none to comfort her: the Lord hath commanded concerning Jacob, that his adversaries should be round about him: Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them. 18. The Lord is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment: hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow; my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity. 19. I called for my lovers, but they deceived me; my priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city, while they sought their meat, to relieve their souls. 20. Behold, O Lord, for I am in distress; my bowels are troubled: my heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled: abroad the sword herewith, at home there is as death. 21. They have heard that I sighed; there is none to comfort me: all mine enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that thou hast done it: thou wilt bring the day that thou hast called, and they shall be like unto me. 22. Let all their wickedness come before thee: and do unto them as thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions: for my sighs are many, and my heart is faint. The complaints here are, for substance, the same with those in the foregoing part of the chapter; but, in these verses, the prophet, in the name of the lamenting church, does more particularly acknowledge the hand of God in these calamities, and the rigour of his hand. 1. The church in distress here magnifies her affliction; and yet no more than there was cause for; her groaning was not heavier than her strokes. She appeals to all spectators; See if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, v. 12. This might, perhaps, be truly said of Jerusalem’s griefs; but we are apt to apply it too sensibly to ourselves when we are in trouble, and more than there is cause for. Because we feel most from our own barbarism, and cannot be persuaded to reconceive ourselves to it, we are ready to cry out, Surely, never was sorrow like unto our sorrow; whereas, if our troubles were to be thrown into a common stock with these of others, and then an equal dividend made, share and share alike rather than stand to that, we should each of us say, “Pray, give me my own again.” 2. She here looks beyond the instruments to the Author of her troubles, and owns them all to be directed, designed, and disposed of, by him “the Lord that has afflicted me, and he has afflicted me because he is angry with me; the greatness of his displeasure may be measured by the greatness of my distress; it is in the day of his fierce anger,” v. 12. Afflictions cannot but be very much our griefs, when we see them arising from God’s wrath; and the church does here. (1.) She as one in a flower, and the flower is as the hand that burned fire into my bones, (v. 13.) preternatural heat, which prevails against them, so that they are burnt like a hearth, (Ps. cii. 3.) pains and wasted, and dried away. (2.) She as one in a nett, which the more he struggles to get out of, the more he is entangled, in, and this nett of God’s spreading: “The enemies could not have succeeded in their stratagems, had not God spread a nett for my feet,” (v. 12.) (3.) She is as one in a wilderness, whose way is embarrassed, solitary, and tiresome; “He has turned me back, that I cannot go on, has made me desolate, that I have nothing to support me with, but am faint all the day.” (4.) She is as one in a yoke, not yoked for service, but for penance, tied neck and heels together; (v. 14.) The yoke of my transgressions is bound by the hand of the Lord. Observe, We never are entangled in any yoke but what is framed on our own transgressions. The sinner is held with the cords of his own sins, Prov. v. 22. The yoke of Christ’s commands is an easy yoke, (Matth. xxi. 30.) but that of our own transgressions is a heavy one, God is said to bind this yoke, when he charges guilt upon us, and brings us into those inward and outward troubles which our sins have deserved; when conscience, and his displeasure, blinds us with his judgment, then the yoke is bound and wreathed by the hand of his justice, and nothing but the hand of his pardoning mercy will unbind it. (5.) She is as one in the dirt, and he it that has trodden under foot all her mighty men, that has disabled them to stand, and overthrown them by one judgment after another, and so left them to be trampled upon by their envious and contentious enemies. 15. The Lord has commanded concerning Jacob, that his adversaries should be round about him: Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them. 18. The Lord is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment: hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow; my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity. 19. I called for my lovers, but they deceived me; my priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city, while they sought their meat, to relieve their souls. 20. Behold, O Lord, for I am in distress; my bowels are troubled: my heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled: abroad the sword herewith, at home there is as death. 21. They have heard that I sighed; there is none to comfort me: all mine enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that thou hast done it: thou wilt bring the day that thou hast called, and they shall be like unto me. 22. Let all their wickedness come before thee: and do unto them as thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions: for my sighs are many, and my heart is faint. 3. She justly demands a share in the pity and compassion of those that were the spectators of her misery; (v. 12.) “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Can you look upon me without concern? Will you not pity me, for I am in the midst of theouches as marbles, that you cannot overcome upon me one compassionate thought, or look, or tear? Are you not also in the body? Is it nothing to you that your neighbour’s house is on fire?” There are these to whom Zion’s sorrows and ruins are nothing; they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. How pathetically does she beg their compassion! (v. 18.)
“Hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow: hear my complaints, and see what cause I have for them. This is a request like that of Job, (ch. xxii. 2.) Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I faint; help me, O my God! This helps to make a barren sit lighter, if our friends sympathise with us, and mingle their tears with ours, for this is an evidence that, though we are in affliction, we are not in contempt, which is commonly as much dreaded in an affliction as any thing.

4. She justifies her own grief, though it was very extreme. She mentions these particulars; (v. 16.) “For these things I weep, I weep in the night;” (v. 2.) “none sees, mine eye, mine eye runs down with water.” Note, This world is a vale of tears to the people of God. Zion’s sons are often Zion’s mourners. Zion spreads forth her hands, (v. 17.) which is here an expression rather of despair than of desire; she flings out her hands as giving up all for gone. Let us see how she accounts for this passionate grief. (1.) Her God is withdrawn from her; and Micah, that had but gods of gold, when they were stolen from him, cried out, What have I more? And what is this that ye say unto me? What aileth thee? The church here grieves excessively, For, says she, the Comforter that should relieve my soul, is far from me. God is the Comforter; he used to be so to her, he only can administer effectual comforts, it is his word that speaks them, it is his Spirit that speaks to us. His are strong consolations, able to relieve the soul, to bring it back when it is gone, and we cannot of ourselves fetch it again; but now he is departed in displeasure, he is far from me, and beholds me afar off. Note, It is no marvel that the souls of the saints faint away, when God, who is the only Comforter that can relieve them, keeps at a distance. (2.) Her children are removed from her, and she is in her reproach; she has no children that she weeps for, as Rachel for hers, because they were not, and therefore she refuses to be comforted. Her children were desolate, because the enemy prevailed against them, there is none of all her sons to take her by the hand; (Isa. li. 18.) they cannot help themselves, and how should they help her? Both the damsels and the youths, that were begotten in her bosom, are become her reproach. (3.) She is said of the Chaldeans, that they had no compassion upon young men or maidens, not on the fair sex, not on the blooming age, 2 Chron. xxxix. 16. (3.) Her friends failed her; some would not, and others could not, give her any relief. She spreads forth her hands, as begging relief, but there is none to comfort her, (v. 17.) none that can do it, none that cares to do it; she called for her lovers, and to engage them to help her, called them her lovers, but they deceived her, (v. 19.) they proved like the brooks in summer to the thirsty traveller, Job vi. 15. Note, Those creatures that we set our hearts upon and raise our expectations from, are commonly deceived and disappointed in. Her idols were her lovers, Egypt and Assyria were her confidants; but they deceived her, (v. 17.) and the corner of her prosperity, were shy of her and strange to her in her adversity. Happy they that have made God their Friend, and keep themselves in his love, for he will not deceive them! (4.) Those whose office it was to guide her, were disabled to do her any service. The priests and the elders, that should have appeared at the head of affairs, die for hunger; (v. 18.) They were ready to aspire, while they sought their meat; they went a begging for bread to keep them alive. The famine is sore indeed in the land, when there is no bread to the wise, when priests and elders are starved. The priests and elders should have been her comforters; but how should they comfort others, when they themselves were comfortless? “They have heard that I sigh, which should have summoned them to mine assistance; but there is none to comfort me.” Lover and friend hast thou put far from me. (5.) Her enemies were too hard for her, and then insulted over her; they have feared fear, 25. Abroad the sword bereaves, and slays all that comes in its way, and at home all provisions are cut off by the besiegers, so that there is as death, famine, which is as bad as the pestilence, or worse—the sword without, and terror within, Deut. xxxii. 25. And as the enemies, that were the instruments of the calamity, were very barbarous, so were they that were the sufferers by the Edomites and Ammonites. It is that bore ill-will to Israel: They have heard of my trouble, and are glad that this was done to it, (v. 21.) they rejoice in the trouble itself, they rejoice that it is God’s doing, it pleases them to find that God and his Israel are fallen out, and they act accordingly with a great deal of strangeness towards them: Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them, that they are afraid of touching, and are shy of, v. 17. Upon all these accounts, it cannot be wondered at, nor can she be blamed, that her sighs are many, in grieving for what is, and that her heart is faint, (v. 22.) in fear of what is yet further likely to be.

5. She justifies God in all that is brought upon her, acknowledging that her sins had deserved these severe chastenings. The stroke that lies so heavy, and binds so hard, is the yoke of her transgressions, v. 14. The fetters we are held in are of our own making, and it is with our own red that we are beaten. When the church had spoken here, as if she thought the Lord severe, she does well to correct herself, at least to explain herself, by acknowledging, (v. 18.) The Lord is righteous. He does us no wrong in dealing thus with us, nor can we charge him with any fault, who knows that grievous soever men are, we are sure that the Lord is righteous, and manifests his justice, though they contradict all the laws of theirs. Note, Whatever our troubles are which God is pleased to inflict upon us, we must own that therein he is righteous; we understand neither him nor ourselves if we do not own it, 2 Chron. xii. 8. She owns the equity of her case, that the Lord, in his dealings with her, has charged her with her own iniquity. The word is, she must, v. 18. They have rebelled against his commandments, (v. 18.) and again, (v. 20.) I have grievously rebelled. We cannot speak ill enough of sin, and we must always speak worst of our own sin, must call it rebellion, grievous rebellion; and very grievous sin is to all true penitents. It is this that lies heavier upon her than the afflictions she was under; “My bowels are troubled, they work within me as the troubled sea: my heart is turned within me, is restless, is turned upside down; for I have grievously rebelled.” Note, Sorrow for sin must be great sorrow, and must affect the soul.

6. She appeals both to the mercy and to the justice of God, in her present case. (1.) She appeals to the mercy of God concerning her own sorrows. She knows the justice of God, and can therefore appeal to his mercy and compassion; (v. 20.) “Behold, O Lord, for I am in distress; take cognizance of my case, and take such order for my relief as thou pleasest.” Note, It is matter of comfort to us, that the troubles which oppress our spirits are open before God’s eye. (2.) She appeals to the justice of God concerning the injuries that her enemies did her; (v. 21, 22.) They shall be cut off with their cup that is fixed in the counsels of God, and published in the prophecies, when mine enemies, that now persecute me, shall be like unto me, when the cup of trembling, now put into my hands, shall be put into theirs. It may be read as a prayer, “Let the days appointed come,” and so it goes on, “Let their wickedness come before thee, let it come to be
remembered, let it come to be reckoned for; take vengeance on them, for all the wrong they have done to me; (Ps. cix. 14, 15.) hasten the time when thou wilt do them for their transgression as thou hast done to me for mine.” This prayer amounts to a protestation against all thoughts of coalition with them, and to a prediction of their ruin, subscribing to that which God had in his word spoken of it. Note, Our prayers may and must agree with God’s word; and what day God has there called, we are to call for, and no other. And though we are bound in charity to forgive our enemies, and to pray for them, yet we may in faith pray for the accomplishment of that which God has spoken against his and his church’s enemies, that will not repent to give him glory.

CHAP. II.

The second alphabetical elegy is set to the same mournful tune with the former, and the substance of it is much the same; it begins with Ecbab, as that did, “How sad is our case! Alas! for us.” 1. Here is the anger of Zion’s God taken notice of, as the cause of her calamities, v. 1, 2. 2. Here is the sorrow of Zion’s children taken notice of, as the effect of her calamities, v. 10. 19. 111. The complaint is made to God, and the matter referred to his compassionate consideration, v. 20. 22. The hand that wounded must make whole. 1. HOW hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger! 2. The Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied: he hath thrown down in his wrath the strong holds of the daughter of Judah; he hath brought them down to the ground: he hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof. 3. He hath cut off in his fierce anger all the horn of Israel: he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy, and he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, which devoureth round about. 4. He hath bent his bow like an enemy: he stood with his right hand as an adversary, and slew all that were pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion; he poured out his fury like fire. 5. The Lord was as an enemy; he hath swallowed up Israel, he hath swallowed up all her palaces; he hath destroyed his strong holds, and hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation. 6. And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as if it were of a garden; he hath destroyed his places of the assembly: the Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised, in the indignation of his anger, the king and the priest. 7. The Lord hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary, he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; they have made a noise in the house of the Lord, as in the day of a solemn feast. 8. The Lord hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daugh-

ter of Zion; he hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying: therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament; they languished together. 9. Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars; her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the Lord.

It is a very sad representation which is here made of the state of God’s church, of Jacob and Israel, of Zion and Jerusalem; but the emphasis in these verses seems to be laid all along upon the hand of God in the calamities which they were grieving under. This grief is not such that such and such things are done, as that God has done them, that he appears angry with them; it is he that chastens them, and chastens them in wrath and in his hot displeasure; he is become their Enemy, and fights against them; and this, is the woodworm and the gall in the affliction and the misery.

I. Time was, when God’s delight was in his church, and he appeared to her, and for her, as a Friend; but now, he is displeased with her, and stands an enemy, he is angry with her, and appears and acts against her as an Enemy. This is frequently repeated here, and sadly lamented. What he has done he has done in his anger; this makes the present day a melancholy day indeed with us, that it is the day of his anger, (v. 1.) and again, (v. 2.) it is in his wrath, and (v. 3.) it in his fierce anger, that he has thrown down and cast off and (v. 6.) in the indignation of his anger. Note. To those who know how to value God’s favour, nothing appears more dreadful than his anger; corrections in love are easily borne, but rebukes in wrath wound deep. It is God’s wrath that burns against Jacob like a flaming fire, (v. 3.) and it is a consuming fire, it devours round about, devours all her honours, all her comforts. This is the fire that is poured out like fire, (v. 4.) like the fire and brimstone which were rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah: but it was their sin that kindled this fire. God is such a tender Father to his children, that we may be sure he is never angry with them but when they provoke him, and give him cause to be angry; nor is he ever angry more than there is cause for. God’s covenant with them was, that if they should break the covenant, he would call upon any nation against them, to their enemies, (Exod. xxviii. 22.) and he had been so, as long as they kept close to him; but now he is an Enemy to them; at least he is an Enemy, v. 5. He has bent his bow like an Enemy, v. 4. He stood with his right hand stretched out against them, and a sword drawn in it as an Adversary. God is not really an Enemy to his people, no, not when he is angry with them, and corrects them in anger, We may be sorely displeased against our dearest friends and relations, whom yet we are far from having an enmity to. But sometimes he is as an Enemy to them, when all his providences concerning them seem in outward appearance to have a tendency to ruin; when every thing makes against them, and nothing for them. But, blessed be God, Christ our Peace, he is the Peacemaker, he RATTS SLEA. He, who else slays the enemy, and in him we may agree with our Adversary, which it is our wisdom to do, since it is in vain to contend with him, and he offers us advantageous conditions of peace.

II. Time was when God’s church appeared very bright and illustrious, and considerable among the nations; but now the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud, (v. 1.) a dark cloud, which is very terrible to herself, and through which she cannot see his face; a thick cloud, (so the word sign-
lies.) a black cloud, which eclipses all her glory, and conceals her excellency; not such a cloud as that under which God conducted them through the wilderness, or that in which God took possession of the temple, and filled it with his glory: no, that side of the cloud is now turned toward them, which was turned toward the Egyptians in the Red sea. The beauty of Israel is now cast down from heaven to the earth; their princes, (2 Sam. i. 19.) their religion, and their beauty, are in the hands of the enemy, which recommended them into the affection and esteem of their neighbours, and rendered them amiable, which had lifted them up to heaven, was now withered and gone; because God had covered it with a cloud. He has cut off all the horn of Israel, (v. 3.) all her beauty and majesty, (Ps. cxxxii. 17.) all her plenty and fulness, and all her power and authority. They had, in their pride, lifted up their horn against God, and therefore justly will God cut off their horn; he disabled them to resist and oppose his enemies, he turned back their right hand, so that they were not able to follow the bow which they gave, nor to ward off the bow which was given them. What can their right hand do against the enemy, when God draws it back, and withereth it, as he did Jericho's? Thus was the beauty of Israel cast down, when a people famous for their sumptuous palaces, able to stand their ground, and make good their post.

III. Time was, when Jerusalem and the cities of Judah were strong and well fortified, were trusted by the inhabitants, and let alone by the enemy as impregnable; but now the Lord has in anger swallowed them up, they are quite gone, the forts and barriers are taken away, and the invincible, notwithstanding no opposition; the stately structures, which were their strength and beauty, are pulled down and laid waste. 1. The Lord has in anger swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, (v. 2.) both the cities and the country-houses; they are burnt, or otherwise destroyed, so totally ruined, that they seem to have been swallowed up, and no remains left of them. He has swallowed up, and has not spared; one would have thought it pity that such sumptuous houses, so well built, so well furnished, should be quite destroyed; and that some pity should have been had for the poor inhabitants that were thus dislodged and driven to wander; but God's wonted compensations seemed to fail; He has swallowed up Israel, as a lion swalloweth up his prey, v. 5. 2. He has swallowed up not only her common habitations, but her palaces, all her palaces, and her sumptuous palaces, (v. 5.) though those were most stately, and strong, and rich, and well guarded. God's judgments, when they come with commission, level palaces with cottages, and as easily swallow them up. If palaces be polluted with sin, as theirs were, let them expect to be visited with a curse, which shall consume them, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof, Zech. vii. 5. He has destroyed them; they were long-places, but their strong huts, their castles, citadels, and places of defence, these he has thrown down in his wrath, and brought them to the ground; for shall they stand in the way of his judgments, and give a check to the progress of them? No, let them drop like leaves in autumn, let them be razed to the foundations, and made to touch the ground, v. 2. And again, (v. 5.) what have they done, that they should have so much strength, that they could have against God, and therefore increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation, for they could not but be in a dreadful consternation when they saw all their defence departed from them. This is again insisted on, v. 7.—9. In order to the swallowing up of her palaces, he has given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces, which were their security, and when they are broken down the palaces themselves are soon broken into. The walls of palaces cannot protect them, unless God himself be a Wall of fire round about them. This God did in his anger, and yet he has done it deliberately; it is the result of a previous purpose, and is done by a wise and steady providence; for the Lord has purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion, he brought the Chaldean army in, on purpose to do this execution. When the Chaldean army passed by his church, they are all according to his counsels; he performed the thing that is appointed for us, even that which makes most against us. But when it is done, he has stretched out a line, a measuring-line, to do it exactly and by measure: hitherto the destruction shall go, and no further; no more shall be cut off than what is marked to be so. Or, it is meant he performed one of the customary ceremonies for the line; for he will go on with his work, he has not withdrawn his hand from destroying, that right hand which he stretched out against his people as an adversary, (v. 4.) as far as the purpose went the performance shall go, and his hand shall accomplish his counsel to the utmost, and not be withdrawn. Therefore he made the rampart and the wall which the people had rejected in, and upon which, perhaps, they had laid great hopes, to be solemnly destroyed together; the walls and the ramparts, or bulwarks upon them, fell together, and were left to condole with one another on their fall. Her gates are gone in an instant, so that one would think they were sunk into the ground with their own weight, and he has destroyed and broken her bars, those bars of Jerusalem's gates which formerly he had strengthened, Ps. cxxi. 9. and 7. v. 5. He has performed his work, and has brought down all those that were against her, when she had been so long against God, and therefore justly shall he cut off her horn; he disabled them from resisting and attacking her enemies, he turned back their right hand, so they were not able to follow the bow which they gave, nor to ward off the blow which was given them. What can their right hand do against the enemy, when God draws it back, and withereth it, as he did Jericho's? Thus was the beauty of Israel cast down, when a people famous for their sumptuous palaces, able to stand their ground, and make good their post.

IV. Time was, when their government flourished, their princes made a figure, and their kingdom was great among the nations, and the balance of power was on their side; but now it is quite otherwise; He has polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof, v. 2. They had first polluted themselves with their idolatries, and then God dealt with them as with polluted things, he threw them to the dunghill, the fittest place for them. He has given up their glory, which was looked upon as sacred, (that is a character we give to majesty,) to be trampled upon and profaned; and no marvel that the king and the priest, whose characters were always deemed venerable and inviolable, are despised by every body, when God has, in the indignation of his soul, performed his work, and brought down all those that were against her, when she had been so long against God, and therefore justly shall he cut off her horn; he disabled them from resisting and attacking her enemies, he turned back their right hand, so they were not able to follow the bow which they gave, nor to ward off the blow which was given them. What can their right hand do against the enemy, when God draws it back, and withereth it, as he did Jericho's? Thus was the beauty of Israel cast down, when a people famous for their sumptuous palaces, able to stand their ground, and make good their post.

V. Time was, when the ordinances of God were administered among them in their power and purity, and they had those tokens of God's presence among them: but now they are no more; the ark was taken away, the footstool, between the cherubins; this was of all others the most sacred symbol of God's presence; (it is called his footstool, 1 Chron. xxviii. 2. Ps. xcvii. 5.—cxxxii. 7.) there the Shechinah rested, and with an eye to this, Israel was often protected and saved; but now he remembered not his footstool, the ark itself was suffered, as it should seem, to fall into the
hands of the Chaldeans. God, being angry, threw that away, for it shall be no longer his footstool, the earth shall be so, as it had been before the ark was, Isa. lxvi. 1. Of what little value are the tokens of his presence, when his presence is gone! Nor was this the first time that God gave his ark into captivity by the hand of God and his kingdom can stand without that footstool.

2. They that ministered in holy things had been pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion, (v. 4.) they had been purer than snow, whiter than milk, (ch. iv. 7.) none more pleasant in the eyes of all good people than those that did the service of the tabernacle; but now these are slain, and their blood mingled with their sacrifices; thus is the day of their' vacations and the day of their deaths. When those that were pleasant to the eye in Zion's tabernacle are slain, God must be acknowledged in it, he has done it, and the burning which the Lord has kindled must be bewailed by the whole house of Israel, as in the case of Nadab and Abihu, Lev. x. 6.

3. The temple was God's tabernacle, (as the tabernacle, while that was in being, is called his temple, Ps. xxvii. 4.) and this he has violated, taken away, (v. 6.) he has plucked up the stakes of it, and cut the cords, it shall be no more a tabernacle, much less his; he has taken it away, as the keeper of a garden takes away his hovel or shed, when he has done with it, and has no more occasion for it; he takes it down as easily, as speedily, and with as little regret and reluctance, as if it were but a shed, and gone, and over again, as a garden of cucumbers, (Isa. i. 8.) but a booth which the keeper makes, Job xxxvii. 18. When men profane God's tabernacle, it is just with him to take it from them. God had justly refused to smell in their solemn assemblies; (Amos v. 21.) they had provoked him to withdraw from them, and then no marvel that he has destroyed his places of the assembly; what should they do with the places when the services were become an abomination? He has now abhorred his sanctuary; (v. 7.) it has been defiled with sin, that only thing which he hates, and for the sake of that he abhors even his sanctuary, which he had delighted in, and called his rest for ever, Ps. cxxii. 14. Thus he had done to Shiloh. Now the enemies have made as great a noise of reveling and blasphemy in the house of the Lord, as ever was made with the temple-songs and music in the day of a solemn feast, Ps. lixiv. 4. Some, by the places of the assembly, (v. 6.) understand not only the temple, but the synagogues, and the schools of the prophets, which the enemy had burnt up, Ps. lixiv. 4.

4. The solemn feasts and the sabbaths had been carefully remembered, and the people constantly put in mind of them; but now the Lord has caused those to be forgotten, not only in the country, among those that lived at a distance, but even in Zion itself; for there were none left to remember them, nor were the places left where they used to be observed. Now that Zion was in ruins, no difference was made between sabbath-times and other times; every day was a day of mourning, so that all the solemn feasts were forgotten. Note, It is just with God to deprive those of the benefit and comfort of sabbaths and solemn feasts, who have not duly valued them, nor conscientiously observed them, but have profaned them, which was one of the sins that the Jews were often charged with. They that have seen the law in the Son of man, and slighted them, may desire to see one of those days, and not have them, Luke xvii. 22.

5. The altar that had sanctified their gifts is now cast off, for God will no more accept their gifts nor be honoured by their sacrifices, v. 7. The altar was the table of the Lord, but God will no longer keep house among them, he will neither feast them, nor feast with them.

6. They had been blest with prophets, and teachers of the law; but now the law is no more, (v. 9.) it is no more read by the people, no more expounded by the scribes, the tables of the law are gone with the ark, the book of the law is taken from them, and the people are forbidden to have it. What should they do with Bibies, who had made no better improvement of them when they had them? Her prophets also, find no vision from the Lord; God answers them no more by prophets and dreams, which was the melancholy case of Saul, 1 Sam. xxviii. 13. They had persecuted God's prophets, and despised the visions they had from the Lord, and therefore it is just with God to say that they shall have no more prophets, no more visions. Let them go to the prophets that had flattered and deceived them with visions of their own hearts, for they shall have none from God to comfort them, or tell them how long. They that misuse God's prophets justly lose them.

10. The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, and keep silence: they have cast up dust upon their heads; they have girded themselves with sackcloth: the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground. 11. Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people; because the children and the sucking swoon in the streets of the city. 12. They say to their mothers, Where is corn and wine! when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured out into their mothers' bosom. 13. What thing shall I take to witness for thee! what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion! for thy breach is great like the sea; who can heal thee? 14. Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee; and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thine captivity; but have seen for thee false burdens, and causes of banishment. 15. All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth? 16. All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee: they hiss and gnash the teeth: they say, We have swallowed her up: certainly this is the day that we looked for; we have found, we have seen it. 17. The Lord hath done that which he had devised; he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old: he hath thrown down, and hath not pitied: and he hath caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee; he hath set up the horn of thine adversaries. 18. Their heart cried unto the Lord, O wall of the daughter of
LAMENTATIONS, II.

Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night; give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine eye cease. 19. Arise, cry out in the night; in the beginning of the watches pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street. 20. Behold, O Lord, and consider to whom thou hast done this. Shall the women eat their fruit, and children of a span long? shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord? 21. The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets: my virgins and my young men fallen by the sword; thou hast slain them in the day of thine anger; thou hast killed, and not pitied. 22. Thou hast called, as in a solemn day, my terrors round about; so that in the day of the Lord's anger none escaped nor remained: those that I have swaddled and brought up hath mine enemy consumed.

Justly are these called Lamentations, and they are very pathetic ones; the expressions of grief in perfection, mourning and wo, and nothing else, like the contents of Ezekiel's roll, Ezek. ii. 10.

I. Copies of lamentations are here presented, and they are pointed to the life. 1. The judges and magistrates, who used to appear in robes of state, have laid them aside, or rather are stripped of them, and put on the habit of mourners. The elders now sit no longer in the judgment-seats, the thrones of the house of David, but they sit upon the ground, having no seat to repose themselves in, or in token of great grief, as Job's friends sat with him upon the ground, Job ii. 13. They open not their mouth in the gate, as usual, to give their opinion, but they keep silence, overwhelmed with grief, and not knowing what to say. The elders cover their heads, and girded themselves with sackcloth, as deep mourners used to do; they had lost their power and wealth, and that made them take on thus; Plorator lachrymis amissa pecunia veris—Genuine are the tears which we shed over lost property. 2. The young ladies, who used to dress themselves so richly, and walk with stretch-

ed-fourth weeks, (Isa. iii. 16.) now are humbled: the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground: they are made to know sorrow, who seemed to bid defiance to it, and were always disposed to be merry. 3. The prophet himself is a pattern to the mourners; (v. 11.) his eyes do fail with tears, he has wept till he can weep no more, has almost wept his eyes out, wept himself blind. Nor are the inward impressions of grief short of the outward expression; nor are his mother and his mother's mother troubled, as they were when he saw these calamities coming, (Jer. iv. 19, 20.) which, one would think, might have excused him now; but even he, to whom they were no surprise, felt them an insupportable grief, to that degree that his liver is poured out on the earth; he felt himself a perfect colliquation; all his entreaties are melted and dissolved, as Ps. xxii. 14. Jeremiah himself had better treatment than his neighbours, better than he had before from his own countrymen, nay, their destruction was his deliverance, their captivity his enlargement; the same that made them prisoners, made him a favourite, and yet his private interests are swallowed up in a concern for the public, and he bewails the destruction of the daughter of his people, as sensibly as if he himself had been the greatest sufferer in that common calamity. Note, The judgments of God upon the land and its inhabitants are to be lamented by his people, though we, for our parts, may escape pretty well. 2. Calls to lamentation are here given; The heart of the people cried unto the Lord, v. 18. Some fear it was a cry, not of true repentance, but of bitter complaint; their heart was as full of grief as it could hold, and they gave vent to it in delightful shrieks and enteries, in which they made use of God's name; and though they will never say, Lord, how art thou fallen from the days of thy youth; yet did in sincerity cry unto God for mercy in their distress, and the prophet bids them go on to do so; O wall of the daughter of Zion, either ye that stand upon the wall, ye watchmen on the wails, (Isa. lxiii. 6.) when ye see the enemies encamped about the walls, and making their approaches towards them, or because of the wall, (that is the subject of the lamentation,) because of the breaking down of the wall, which was not done till about a month after the city was taken, because of this further calamity, let the daughter of Zion lament still. This was a thing which Nehemiah lamented long after, Neh. i. 3, 4. Let tears run down like a river day and night, weep without intermission, give thyself no rest from weeping, let not the apple of thine eye cease. This intimates, 1. That the calamities would be the more lamented, the more frequently recur, and fresh occasion would be given them every day and every night to bewail themselves. 2. That they would be apt, by degrees, to grow insensible and stupid under the hand of God, and would need to be still called upon to afflict their souls yet more and more, till their proud and hard hearts were thoroughly humbled and softened.

II. Causes for lamentation are here assigned, and the calamities seemed to be the more lamented, and are very particularly and pathetically described.

1. Multitudes perish by famine: a very sore judgment, and piteous is the case of those that fall under it. God had corrected them by scarcity of provisions through want of rain some time before, (Jer. xiv. 1.) and they were not brought to repentance by that lower degree of this judgment, and therefore when the next season of rain was wanting, brought upon them in extremity; for, (1.) The children died for hunger in their mothers' arms; The children and sucklings, whose innocent and helpless state entitles them to relief as soon as any, swoon in the streets, (v. 11.) as the wounded, (v. 12.) there being no food to be had for them; they that are starved die as surely as they that are stabbed; they lie a great while crying to their poor mothers for corn to feed them, and come to refresh them, for they are such as had been bred up to the use of wine, and wanted it now; but there is none for them, so that at length their soul is poured out into their mothers' bosom, and there they breathe their last. This is mentioned again, (v. 19.) They faint for hunger in the top of every street. Yet this is not the worst, (2.) There were some little children that were slain by the sword, (v. 20.) Such is the severity of the scarcity of provisions, that even the women ate the fruit of their own bodies, even their children, when they were but of a span long, according to the threatening, Deut. xxviii. 53. The like was done in the siege of Samaria, 2 Kings vi. 29. Such extremities, nay, such barbarities, were they brought to by the famine. Let us, in our abundance, thank God that we have; and to complain of grief would perplex only for ourselves, but for our children.

2. Multitudes fall by the sword, which devours one as well as another, especially when it is in the hand of such cruel enemies as the Chaldeans were.

(1.) They spared no character, no, not the most distinguished; even the priest and the prophet, who of
all men, one would think, might expect protection from heaven, and vengeance on earth, are slain, not alone in the field of battle, where they are out of their place, as Hopni and Phinehas, but in the sanctuary of the Lord, the place of their business, and which they hoped would have been a refuge to them. (2.) They spared no age, no, not those who, by reason of their tender or their decrepit age, were exempted from taking up the sword; for even they perished by the sword; the young and the old, who had had their discharge, lie on the ground, slain in the streets, till some kind hand is found that will bury them. (3.) They spared no sex; My virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword. In the most barbarous military executions that ever we read of, the virgins were spared, and made part of the spoil; (Num. xxxi. 18. Judges v. 30.) but in Jer. they were not spared, and this with such severity as if there was none to care for them, and as if they were as little esteemed as the young men. (4.) This was the Lord’s doing, he suffered the sword of the Chaldeans to devour thus without distinction; Thou hast slain them in the day of thine anger, for it is God that kills and makes alive, and saves as he pleases. But that which follows is very harsh, Thou hast killed, and not fitted; for his soul is not grieved for the death of any; and God knows how to fit the sword of his vengeance, as cruelly as such as he had both murdered and summoned; (v. 22.) Thou hast called in, as in a solemn day, my terrors round about, the Chaldeans, who are such a terror to me; enemies crowded into Jerusalem now as thick as ever worshippers used to do on a solemn festival; so that they were quite overpower’d with numbers, and none escaped nor remain’d; Jerusalem was made a perfect desolation of her houses. Mothers are cut to the heart to see those whom they have taken such care of, and pangs with, and whom they have been so tender of, thus inhumanly used, suddenly cut off, though not soon rea’d; Those that I have swaddled and brought up, has mine enemy consumed, as if they were brought forth for the murderer, like lambs for the butcher; Hos. ix. 13. Zeph, who was a mother to them all, lamented to see those who were brought up in her courts, and under the tuition of her oracles, thus made a prey.

3. Their false prophets cheated them, v. 14. This was a thing which Jeremiah had lamented long before, and had observed with a great concern; (Jer. xiv. 13.) Ah, Lord God, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the end of the evil which shall come upon you in all his lamentations; Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee; they pretended to discover for thee, and then to discover to thee, the mind and will of God, to see the visions of the Almighty, and then to speak his words; but they were all vain and foolish things, their visions were all their own fancies, and if they thought they had any, it was only the product of a crazed head, or as they themselves appeared by what they delivered, which was all idle and impertinent: nay, it is most likely that they themselves knew that the visions they pretended, were counterfeit, and all a sham, and made use of only to colour that which they design’d impress’d upon the people with, that they might make an interest in them for themselves; they are thy prophets, not God’s prophets, they have not the assurance of the prophet after their heart, but the people set them up, told them what they should say, so that they were prophets after their hearts. (1.) Prophets should tell people of their faults, should show them their sins, that they may bring them to repentance, and so prevent their ruin; but these prophets knew that would lose them the people’s affections and contributions, and knew they could not improve their hearers without preaching themselves at the same time, and therefore they have not discovered thine iniquity, they saw it not themselves, or, if they did, saw so little evil in it, or danger from it, that they would not tell them of it, though that might have been a means, by taking away their iniquity, to turn away their captivity. (2.) Prophets should warn people of the judgments of God coming upon them, but these saw for them false baubles; the messages they pretend to deliver to them from God, they know are only as a figment, and that the city was thus reduced, they all (as men are apt to do in such a case) triumphed in its fall, they hissed, and wagged the head, pleasing themselves to see how much it was fallen from its former pretensions; Is this the city (said they) that men called the perfection of beauty? Ps. l. 2. How is it now the perfection of deformity? Where is all its beauty and magnificence? (Is. xiv. 4.) He joyed himself in the height of the earth? (Ps. lxxviii. 2.) which rejoiced in the gifts of God’s beauty and grace more than any other place, and which all the earth rejoiced in? Where is all its joy now, and all its glory? It is a great sin thus to make a jest of others miseries, and adds very much affliction to the afflicted.

4. Their neighbours laughed at them; (v. 15.) All that pass by thee clap their hands at thee. Jerusalem had made a great figure, got a great name, and borne a great sway, among the nations; it was the glory of the whole earth; (Is. xiv. 4.) upon which its fall was the more to be lamented; for who that city was thus reduced, they all (as men are apt to do in such a case) triumphed in its fall, they hissed, and wagged the head, pleasing themselves to see how much it was fallen from its former pretensions; Is this the city (said they) that men called the perfection of beauty? Ps. l. 2. How is it now the perfection of deformity? Where is all its beauty and magnificence? (Is. xiv. 4.) He joyed himself in the height of the earth? (Ps. lxxviii. 2.) which rejoiced in the gifts of God’s beauty and grace more than any other place, and which all the earth rejoiced in? Where is all its joy now, and all its glory? It is a great sin thus to make a jest of others miseries, and adds very much affliction to the afflicted.

5. Their enemies triumphed over them, v. 16. Those that wished ill to Jerusalem and her peace, now vented their spite and malice, which before they concea’d; they now open their mouths, may, they widen them, they hiss and gnash their teeth in scorn and indignation; they triumph in their own success against her, and the rich prey they have got in making themselves masters of Jerusalem: We have swallowed her up, it is our doing, and it is our gain, it is all our own now; Jerusalem shall never be either courted or feared as she has been; certainly this is the day that we have long looked for, we have found it, we have seen it, Aha, so would we have it.” Note, The enemies of the church are apt to take its shocks for its ruins, and to triumph in them accordingly; but they will find themselves deceived; for the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.

The Lord God, in all this, appeared against them, (v. 17.) The Lord has done that which he had devised. The destroyers of Jerusalem could have no power against her, unless it were given them from above; they are but the sword in God’s hand, it is he that has thrown down, and has not fitted; “In this controversy of his with us, we have not had the usual instances of his compassion towards us. He has caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee; (see Job xxx. 11.) he has set up the horn of thine adversaries, has given them power and matter for pride; this is indeed the highest aggravation of the trouble, that God is become their Enemy, and yet it is the strongest argument for patience under it; we are bound to submit to what God does, for, (1.) It is the performance of his purpose; The Lord has done, he has caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee, with counsel and deliberation, not rashly, or upon a sudden resolution; it is the evil that he has framed, (Jer. xviii. 11.) and we may be sure it is framed so as exactly to answer the intention; what God devises against his people is designed for them, and so it will be found in the issue. (2.) It is the accomplishment of his predictions; it is the fulfilling of the scripture; he has now put in execution his word that he has commanded in the days of old. When he gave his law by Moses, he told them what judgments he
LAMENTATIONS, III.

CHAP. III.

The scope of this chapter is the same with that of the two foregoing chapters, but the composition is somewhat different; that was in long verse, this in short; another kind of metre; that was in single alphabets, this in a treble one. Here is, 1. A sad complaint of God's displeasure, and the fruit of it, v. 1-20. 2. Words of comfort to God's people when they are in trouble and distress, v. 21-36. 3. Duty prescribed in this afflicted state, v. 37-41. IV. The complaint renewed, v. 42-54. V. Encouragement to the God of Jacob, who will be a comforter to his people, v. 55-66.

1. A.M. the man that hath seen affliction, by the rod of his wrath. 2. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. 3. Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day. 4. My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones. 5. He hath built against me, and compassed me with gall and travails. 6. He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old. 7. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out; he hath made my chain heavy. 8. Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer. 9. He hath enclosed my ways with hewn stones; he hath made my paths crooked. 10. He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places. 11. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate. 12. He hath bent my bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. 13. He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins. 14. I was a desolation to all my people, and their song all the day. 15. He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood. 16. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel-stones, he hath covered me with ashes. 17. And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity. 18. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord: 19. Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. 20. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.

The title of the 122d Psalm might very fitly be prefixed to this chapter; The prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and potters out his com- plaint before the Lord; for it is very feelingly and
quently that the complaint is here poured out. Let us observe the particulars of it.

1. The prophet complains that God is angry; this gives both birth and bitterness to the affliction; (v. 1.) "I am the man, the remarkable man, that has seen affliction, and has felt it sensibly, by the rod of his wrath." Note, God is sometimes angry with his own people; yet it is to be complained of, as a severe trial, and a heavy bond, (Is. xxxii. 16.) when he comes against them the rod of his wrath, a chastening which, though grievous for the present, will in the issue be advantageous. By this rod we must expect to see affliction, and if we be made to see more than ordinary affliction by that rod, we must not quarrel; for we are sure that the anger is just, and the affliction mild, and mixed with mercy.

2. That he is as one lost altogether in the dark; darkness is put for great trouble and perplexity, the want both of comfort and of direction; this was the case of the complainant; (v. 2.) "He has led me by his providence, and an unaccountable chain of events, into darkness, and not into light; the darkness I feared, and not into the light I hoped for." And, (v. 6.) "He has set me in dark places, dark as the grave, like those that be dead of old, that none may know what they were." Note, The Israel of God, though children of light, sometimes walk in darkness.

3. That God appears against him as an Enemy, as a professed Enemy. God had been for him, but now "Surely against me is he turned, (v. 3.) as far as I can discern, for his hand is turned against me all the day, I am chastened every morning," Ps. lviii. 14. And when God's hand continues thus turned against us, we are tempted to think that his heart is turned against us too; God had said once, (Hos. v. 14.) "I will be as a lion to the house of Judah, and now he has made his word good; (v. 10.) "He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, surprising me with his judgments, and as a lion in secret places, so that which way soever I went, I was in continual fear of being set upon, and could never think myself safe." Do men shoot at those who are enemies to? He has bent his bow, the bow that was ordained against the church's persecutors, that is bent against her sons, (v. 12.) He has set me as a mark for his arrows, which he aims at, and will be sure to hit, and then the arrows of his quiver enter into my reins, give me a mortal wound, an inward wound, and I am left; I had many arrows in his quiver, and they fly swift, and pierce deep.

4. That he is as one sorely afflicted both in body and mind. The Jewish state may now be fatly compared to a man wrinkled with age, for which there is no remedy; (v. 4.) "My flesh and my skin has he made old, they are wasted and withered, and I look like one that is ready to drop into the grave; now, he has broken my bones, and so disabled me to help myself, (v. 15.) He has filled me with bitterness, a bitter sense of these calamities." God has access to the spirit, and can so imbitter that, as thereby to imbitter all the enjoyments; as when the stomach is foul, whatever is eaten, sours in it. "He has made me drunk with wormwood, so intoxicated me with the sense of my afflictions, that I know not what to do, (v. 16.) He has broken my teeth with bread, so that my teeth are broken with it, (v. 16.) and what I eat, is neither pleasant nor nourishing. He has covered me with ashes, as mourners are; or, as some read it, he has fed me with ashes; I have eaten ashes like bread," Ps. cx. 9.

5. That he is not able to discern any way of escape or deliverance; (v. 2.) "He has built against me an house of envy, a besieged city; where there was a way open, it is now quite made up; he has compassed me on every side with gall and travaill, 1 vex, and fret, and tire myself, to find a way of escape, but can find none, (v. 7.) He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out." When Jerusalem was besieged, it was said to be compassed on every side, Luke xix. 43. "I am chained, and as some notorious fact are double-bolted, and loaded with irons, so he has made my chain heavy. He has also (v. 9.) enclosed my ways with break stone, not only hedged up my ways, but set a wall before me, (v. 9.) with a stone wall, which cannot be broken through, so that my paths are made crooked; I traverse to and fro, to the right hand, to the left, to try to get forward, but am still turned back." It is just with God to make those who walk in the crooked paths of sin, crossing God's laws, walk in the crooked paths of affliction, crossing their designs, and breaking their means, (v. 10.) Sometimes, if God saw my way he has blasted all my counsels, ruined my projects, so that I am necessitated to yield to my own ruin; he has pulled me in pieces, he has torn, and is gone away, (Hos. v. 14.) and has made me desolate, has deprived me of all society, and all comfort in my own soul.

6. That God turns a deaf ear to his prayers; (v. 8.) "When I cry and shout, (Ps. lixxiii.) I cry, and ask for mercy, he that is of mercy, (v. 8.) yet he shuts out my prayer, and will not suffer it to have access to him," God's ear is wont to be open to the prayers of his people, and his hand to mercy for them that knock at it; but now both are shut, even to one that cries and shouts. Thus sometimes God seems to be angry even against the prayers of his people, (Ps. lixxiii. 4.) and their case is deplorable indeed, when it is so; and not only the benefit of an answer, but the comfort of acceptance.

7. That his neighbours made a laughing matter of his troubles; (v. 15.) I was a derision to all my people; to all the wicked among them, that made themselves and one another merry with the public judgments, and particularly the prophet Jeremiah's griefs. I am their song, their necrophor, or hand-instrument of music, their tabret, (Job xvii. 6.) that they play upon, as Nero on his harp, when Rome was on fire.

8. That he was ready to despair of relief and deliverance. Thus hath not only taken peace from me, but hast removed my soul far off from peace, (v. 17.) so that it is not only not within reach, but not within view: I forget prosperity; it is so long since I have been there and so far away from it, as if my soul could never cover it, that I have lost the idea of it; I have been so inured to sorrow and servitude, that I know not what joy and liberty mean. I have even given up all for gone, concluding, My strength and my hope are perished from the Lord, (v. 18.) I can no longer stay myself upon God as my Support, for I do not find that he gives me encouragement to do so; nor can I look for his appearing in my behalf, so as to put an end to my troubles, for the case seems remediless, and even my God inexcusable." Without doubt, it was his infirmity to say thus, (Ps. lxxxiii. 10.) for with God there is everlasting strength, and he is his people's never-failing Hope, whatever they may think.

9. That grief returned, upon every remembrance of his trials, and his reflections were as melancholy as his prospects, v. 19, 20. Did he endeavour, as Job did, to forget his complaint? (Job ix. 27.) Alas; it was to no purpose, he remembers upon all occasions, the affliction and the misery, the wormwood and the gall; thus emphatically does he speak of his affliction, for thus did he think of it, thus heavy did it lie when he reviewed it! It was as afflicted as his afflictions; as a wholesome medicine and my transgression; (so some read it;) my trouble, and my sin that brought it upon me; that was the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the
LAMENTATIONS, III.

misery; it is sin that makes the cup of affliction a bitter cup. My soul has them still in remembrance. The thorns of Babylon had all the miseries of the siege in their mind continually, and the flames and ruins of Jerusalem still before their eyes, and when they remembered Zion; nay, they could never forget Jerusalem, Ps. cxxxvii. 1, 5. My soul, having them in remembrance, is humbled in me, not only oppressed with a sense of the trouble, but in bitterness for sin. Note, It becomes us to have humbling providences, and to renew our penitent humiliations for sin upon every remembrance of our afflictions and miseries. Thus we may get good by former corrections, and prevent further.

21. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. 22. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. 23. They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness. 24. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. 25. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. 26. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. 27. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. 28. He sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. 29. He putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope. 30. He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him; he is filled full with reproach. 31. For the Lord will not cast off for ever: 32. But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. 33. For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. 34. To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth, 35. To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the Most High. 36. To subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approves not.

Here the clouds begin to scatter, and the sky to clear up; the complaint was very much concerned in the former part of the chapter, and yet here the tune is altered, and the mourners in Zion begin to look a little pleasant. But for hope, the heart would break. To save the heart from being quite broken, here is something called to mind, which gives ground for hope, (v. 21.) which refers to what comes after, not to what goes before. I make to return to my heart; so the margin words it; what we have had in our hearts, and have laid to our hearts, is sometimes as if it were quite lost and forgotten, till God by his grace make it return to our hearts, that it may be ready to us when we have occasion to use it. "I recall it to mind; therefore have I hope, and am kept from downright despair." Let us see what these things are, which he calls to mind.

1. That bad as things are, it is owing to the mercy of God that they are not worse. We are afflicted by the rod of his wrath, but, it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, v. 22. When we are in distress, we should, for the encouragement of our faith and hope, observe what makes for us as well as what makes against us. Things are bad, but they might have been worse, and therefore there is hope that they may be better. Observe here, (1.) The streams of mercy acknowledged; We are not consumed. Note, The church of God is like Moses's bush burning, yet not consumed; whatever hardships it has met with, or may meet with, it shall have a being in the world to the end of time. It is persecuted of men, but not for sake of God, and therefore, though it is cast down, it is not destroyed; it may be dark, but not consumed; refined in the furnace as silver, but not consumed as dross. (2.) These streams flowed up to the fountain; It is of the Lord's mercies. Here are mercies in the plural number, denoting the abundance and variety of those mercies; God is an inexhaustible Fountain of mercy, the Father of mercies. Note, We all owe it to the sparing mercy of God, that we are not consumed; others have been consumed round about, and we ourselves have been in the consuming, and yet we are not consumed; we are out of the grave, we are out of hell. Had we been dealt with according to our sins, we had been consumed long ago; but we have been dealt with according to God's mercies, and we are bound to acknowledge it to his praise.

2. That even in the depth of their affliction they should have concern for the rights of the divine majesty, and the truth of the divine promise. They had several times complained that God had not pitied (ch. 17, 21.) but here they corrected themselves, and own, (1.) That God's compassions fail not; they do not really fail, no, not then when in anger he seems to have shut up his tender mercies. These rivers of mercy run fully and constantly, but never run dry; no, they are new every morning, even when the morning has been spent, and when we have compassion toward us; he visits us with them every morning, (Job vii. 18.) every morning does he bring his judgment to light, Zeph. iii. 5. When our comforts fail, yet God's compassions do not. (2.) That great is his faithfulness. Though the covenant seemed to be broken, they own that it still continues in full force; and though Jerusalem be in ruins, the truth of the Lord endures forever. Note, Whatever hard things we suffer, we must never entertain any hard thoughts of God, but must still be ready to own that he is both kind and faithful.

3. That God is, and ever will be, the all-sufficient happiness of his people, and they have chosen him, and depend upon him to be such; (v. 24.) The Lord is my Portion, saith my soul; that is, (1.) "When I have lost all I have in the world, liberty and livelihood, and almost life itself, yet I have not lost my interest in God." Portions on earth are perishable things, but God is a Portion for ever. (2.) "While I have an interest in God, therein I have enough; I have that which is sufficient to balance all my troubles, and make up all my lessers." Whatever we are robbed of, our Portion is safe.

4. That those who deal with God will find it is not in vain to trust in him; for, (1.) He is good to those who do so, v. 25. He is good to all; his tender mercies are over all his works, all his creatures taste of his goodness; but he is in a particular manner good to them that wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. Note, While trouble is prolonged, and deliverance is deferred, we must patiently wait for God, and his gracious returns to us; while we wait
for him by faith, we must seek him by prayer; our souls must seek him, else we do not seek so as to find; our seeking will help to keep us up in our waiting; and to those who thus wait and seek, God will be gracious, he will show them his marvellous loving-kindness. (2.) They that do so will find it good for them; (v. 1.) and we will be the more acceptable comfort and satisfaction, to hope and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord. To hope that it will come, though the difficulties that lie in the way of it seem insuperable; to wait till it does come, though it be long delayed; and while we wait to be quiet and silent, not quarrelling with God, or making ourselves uneasy, but acquiescing in the will of God, and resigned to the will of God. If we call this to mind, we may have hope that all will end well at last.

5. That afflictions are really good for us, and, if we bear them aright, will work very much for our good. It is not only good to hope and wait for the salvation of the Lord, but it is good to be under the trouble in the mean time; (v. 27.) It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Many of the young men are carried into captivity; to make them easy in it, he tells them that it was good for them to bear the yoke of that captivity, and they would find it so, if they would but accommodate themselves to their condition, and labour to answer God’s ends in laying that heavy yoke upon them. It is very applicable to the yoke of God’s commands; it is good for young people to bear the yoke of Christ, and to bear it in the youth, because we shall too soon be too religious; it will make our duty the more acceptable to God, and easy to ourselves, if we engage in it when we are young. But here it seems to be meant of the yoke of affliction; many have found it good to bear this in youth, it has made them humble and serious, and has weaned them from the world, who otherwise would have been provoked and unmoved. But the yoke of God is not only to bear, but to accommodate ourselves to, as if it was our own; to be, by faith, obedient unto the yoke. But when do we bear the yoke so that it is really good for us to bear it in our youth? He answers in the following verses, (1.) When we are sedate and quiet under our afflictions; when we sit alone, and keep silence; do not run to and fro into all companies with our complaints, aggravating our calamities, and quarrelling with the disposals of Providence concerning us, but retire into ourselves, and receive the yoke as it is laid upon us. (2.) Under adversity, consider, sit alone, that we may converse with God; and commune with our own hearts, silencing all discontented, distrustful thoughts, and laying our hand upon our mouth, as Aaron, who, under a very severe trial, held his peace. We must keep silence under the yoke, as those that have borne it upon us, not wilfully put it upon our own necks, but patiently submitted to it when God laid it upon us. When those who are afflicted in their youth accommodate themselves to their afflictions, fit their necks to the yoke, and study to answer God’s end in afflicting them, then they will find it good for them to bear it, for it yields the peacable fruit of righteousness to those who are thus exercised thereby. (2.) When patient under our affliction, he gets good by the yoke, who puts his mouth in the dust, not only lays his hand upon his mouth, in token of submission to the will of God in the affliction, but puts it in the dust, in token of sorrow, and shame, and self-loathing, at the remembrance of sin, and as one perfectly reduced and reclaimed, and brought as those that are vanquished to lick the dust, Ps. 107. 9. And we must thus humble ourselves, if so be there may be hope, or, as it is in the original, foradventure there is hope. If there be any way to acquire and secure a good hope under our afflictions, it is this way, and yet we must be very modest in our expectations of it, must look for it with an it may be, as those who own themselves utterly unworthy of it. Note, Those who are truly humble for sin will be glad to obtain a good hope, through grace, upon any terms, though they put their mouth in the dust for it; and those who would have hope, must do so, and ascribe it to free grace. Who will God Jesus has cast out, will then keep their hearts from sinking into the dust, when they put their mouth there. (3.) When we are meek and mild toward those who are the instruments of our trouble, and are of a forgiving spirit, v. 50. He gets good by the yoke, who gives his cheek to him that smites him, and rather turns the other cheek, (Matt. v. 38.) than returns the second blow. Observe, He that does this, for he gave his back to the smiters, Isa. I. 6. He who can bear contempt and reproach, and not render railing for railing, and bitterness for bitterness; who, when he is filled full with reproach, keeps it to himself, and does not retort it, and empty it again, upon those who filled him with it, but pours it out before the Lord, (as those did, Ps. cxviii. 4.) whose souls were exceedingly filled with the contempt of the proud, he shall find that it is good to bear the yoke, and that it shall turn to his spiritual advantage. The sum is, If tribulation work patience, that patience will work experience, and that experience a hope that makes not ashamed.

6. That God will graciously return to his people with seasonable comforts, according to the time that was appointed for their affliction, and might be in greater danger, or, while sensible comforts are suspended, and desired salutations deferred, yet we are not really cast off, because not cast off for ever; the controversy with us shall not be perpetual. (3.) That whatever sorrow we are in, it is what God has allotted us, and his hand is in it: it is he that causes grief, and therefore we may be assured it is ordered wisely and graciously, and it is for our good, that we may bear it, and turn it into wine, even into a health, 1 Pet. i. 6. (4.) That God has compassions and comforts in store even for those whom he has himself grieved; we must be far from thinking that, though God cause grief, the world will relieve and help us; no, the very same that caused the grief, must bring in the favour, or we are undone: Une cadreragere nous futurs, et nous rameaux—The same hand inflicted the wound, and healed it. He has torn, and he will heal us, Hos. vi. 1. (5.) That, when God returns to deal graciously with us, it will not be according to our merits, but according to his mercies, according to the multitude, the abundance, of his mercies. So unworthy we are, that nothing but an abundant mercy will relieve us; and from that we may not expect to be exalted; we are not lifted up, but cast down; so as not to be discouraged at all to those expectations.

7. That, when God does cause grief, it is for wise and holy ends, and he takes not delight in our calamities, v. 33. He does indeed afflict, and grieve the children of men, all their grievances and afflictions are from him, but he does not do it willingly, not from the heart; so the word is. (1.) He gives griefs to us, but when we give him cause to do it; he does not dispense his favours as he does his favours, ex mero motu—from his mere good pleasure; if he show us kindness, it is because so it seems good unto him; but if he write bitter things against us, it is because we both deserve it, and need it. (2.) He does not afflict with pleasure; he delights not in th
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death of sinners, or the disquiet of saints, but punishes with a kind of reluctance; he comes out of his place to punish, for his place is the mercy-seat; he delights not in the misery of any of his creatures, but, as it respects his own people, he is so far from it, that in all their afflictions he is afflicted, and his soul is grieved for the misery of Israel. (3.) He regards his kindred for a people more than when he afflicts them; if he does not willingly grudge the children of men, much less his own children; however it be, yet God is good to them, (Ps. lxxiii. 1.) and they may by faith see love in his heart even then when they see trowns in his face, and a rod in his hand.

8. That, though he makes use of men as his hand, or rather instruments in his hand, for correcting of his people, yet he is far from being pleased with the injustice of their proceedings, and the wrong they do them, v. 34.—36. Though God serves his own purposes by the violence of wicked and unreasonable men, yet it does not therefore follow that he countenances that violence, as his oppressed people are sometimes tempted to think; (Hab. i. 13.) Wherefore lookst thou upon them that deal treacherously? God is grieved at it, as if they were his enemies, and the prophet here assures us that God does not approve of either of them. (1.) If men injure them by force of arms, God does not approve of that. He does not himself crush under his feet the prisoners of the earth, but he regards the cry of the prisoners; nor does he approve of men's doing it; may, he is much displeased with it. It is barbarous to sample on them that are down; (v. 35.) That God sees them. It is before the face of the Most High, (v. 35.) it is in his sight, under his eye, and is very displeasing to him; they cannot but know it is so, and therefore it is in defiance of him that they do it. He is the Most High, whose authority over them they contend by abusing their authority over their subjects; not considering that he that is higher than the highest, regards it, Eccl. v. 8. [2.] That God is grieved that it is done; he should do injustice, or countenance those that do it.

37. Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not? 38. Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good? 39. Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? 40. Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord. 41. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens.

That we may be entitled to the comforts administered to the afflicted in the foregoing verses, and may taste the sweetness of them, we have here the duties of an afflicted state prescribed to us, in the performance of which we may expect those comforts.

We must see and acknowledge the hand of God in all the calamities that befall us at any time, whether personal or public, v. 37, 38. This is here laid down as a great truth, which will help to quicken our souls to our state of afflictions, and to animate us to seek to satisfy them. (1.) That, whatever men's actions are, it is God that overrules them; Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, that designs a thing, and brings his designs to effect, if the Lord command it not? Men can do nothing but according to the counsel of God, nor have any power or success but what is given them from above. A man's heart deviseth his way; he projects and purposes; he says I will, I will do so and so, (Isa. xi. 13.) but God directs the steps far otherwise than he designed them, and what he contrived and expected does not come to pass, unless it he what God's hand and his counsel had determined before to be done, Prov. xvi. 9. Jer. x. 23. The Chaldeans said that they would destroy Jerusalem, and it came to pass, not because they said it, but because God commanded it. (2.) Note, Men are but tools which the great God works with, and manages as he pleases, in the government of this lower world; and they cannot accomplish any of their designs without him. (2.) That, whatever men's lot is, it is God that orders it; Out of the mouth of the Most High do not evil and good proceed? Yes, certainly they do; and it is more emphatically expressed in the original. Do not evil, and good, succeed in our mouth, and proceed from the Most High? Is it not what he has ordained and appointed for us? Yes, certainly it is; and for the reconciling of us to our own afflictions, whatever they be, this general truth must thus be particularly applied. This comfort I receive from the hand of God, and shall not receive that evil also? so Job argues, ch. ii. 10. Are we healthful or sickly, rich or poor? Do we succeed in our designs, or are we crossed in them? It is all what God orders; every man's judgment proceeds from him. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; he forms the light, and creates the darkness, as he did at first.

Note, All the events of Divine Providence are the products of a divine counsel; whatever is done God has the directing of it, and the works of his hands agree with the words of his mouth; he speaks, and it is done; so effectually, so effectually are all his purposes fulfilled!

2. We must not quarrel with God for any affliction that he lays upon us at any time; (v. 30.) Wherefore does a living man complain? The prophet here seems to check himself for the complaint he had made in the former part of the chapter, wherein he seemed to reflect upon God as unkind and severe: "Do I well to be angry? Why do I fret thus?" Those who are children have children with God, must, in the reflection, chide themselves for it. From the doctrine of God's sovereign and universal providence, which he had asserted in the verses before, he draws this inference, Wherefore does a living man complain? What God does we must not open our mouths against, Ps. xxxix. 9. They that blame his lot, reproach him, and calumniate it to others, to such as are his captives must be ready to answer to the will of God in all their sufferings. Note, Though we may pour out our complaints before God, we must never exhibit any complaints against God. What! Shall a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? The reasons here urged are very cogent. (1.) We are men; let us herein show ourselves men. Shall a man complain? And again, a man! We are men, and not brutes, reasonable creatures, who should act with reason,
who should look upward, and look forward, and both ways may fetch considerations enough, to silence our complaints. We are men, and not children that cry for every thing that hurts them; we are men, and not gods, subjects, not lords; we are not our own masters, not our own carvers, we are bound, and must obey, must submit; we are men, and not angels, and therefore cannot expect to be free from all manner of evil; we are not Thal-ents of that world where there is no sorrow, but this where there is nothing but sorrow; we are men, and not devils, are not in that deplorable, helpless, hopeless state that they are in, but have something to comfort ourselves with, which they have not. (2.) We are living men; through the good hand of God upon us we are alive yet, though dying daily; and shall a living man complain? No, he has more reason to complain of the burdens and calamities of life. Our lives are frail and forfeited, and yet we are alive; now the living, the living, they should praise, and not complain; (Isa. xxxviii. 19.) while there is life there is hope, and therefore, instead of complaining that things are bad, we should encourage ourselves with the hope that they will be better. (3.) We are stewards of a great trust committed to our hands, it is the just punishment of our sins; nay, it is far less than our iniquities have deserved; we have little reason to complain of our trouble, for it is our own doing, we may thank ourselves, our own wickedness corrects us; (Prov. xix. 3.) we have no reason to quarrel with God, for he is righteous in us, he is the Governor of the world, and it is necessary that he should maintain the honour of his government, by chastising the disobedient. Are we suffering for our sins? Then let us not complain, for we have other work to do; instead of repining, we must be repenting; and as an evidence that God is reconciled to us, we must be endeavouring to reconcile ourselves to his holy will. Are we punished for our sins? It is our wisdom then to submit, and to kiss the rod; for if we still walk contrary to God, he will punish us yet seven times more, for when he judges he will overcome; but if we accommodate ourselves to him, though we be chastened of the Lord, we shall not be condemned with the world.

3. We must set ourselves to answer God's intention in afflicting us, which is, to bring sin to our remembrance, and to bring us home to himself, v. 40. These are the two things which our afflictions should put us upon. We must go about searching ourselves, and a reflection upon our lives past; Let us search and try our ways, search what they have been, and then try whether they have been right and good or not; search as for a malefactor in disguise, that flies, and hides himself, and then try whether guilty or not guilty. Let conscience be employed both to search and to try, and let it have leave. When faithfully, to account it an obliging search, and to make an impartial trial. Let us try our ways, that by them we may try ourselves, for we are to judge of our state not by our faint wishes, but by our steps; not by one particular step, but by our ways; the ends we aim at, the rules we go by, and the agreeableness of the temper of our minds and the tenour of our lives to those ends and those rules. When faithfully, to account it an obliging search, and to make an impartial trial. Let us consider our ways, (Hag. i. 3.) that what is amiss may be rectified, and amended for the future, and so we may answer the intention of the affliction. We are apt, in times of public calamity, to reflect upon other people's ways, and lay blame upon them, whereas our business is to search and try our own ways; we have work enough to do at home; we must. If we do not, we may each of us mend one, and then we should all be mended. (2.) A sincere conversion to God; "Let us turn again to the Lord, to him who is turned against us, and whom we have turned from; to him let us turn by repentance and reformation, as to our Owner and Ruler: we have been with him, and it has never been well with us since we forsake him, let us therefore now turn again to him." This must accompany the former, and be the fruit of its there-fore we must search and try our ways, that we may turn from the evil of our ways. God did this way the method David took; (Ps. cxix. 59.) I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto the testimonies.

4. We must offer up ourselves to God, and our best affections and services, in the flames of devotion, v. 41. When we are in affliction, (1.) We must look up to God, as a God in the heavens, infinitely above us, and who has an incontestable dominion over us, and are therefore not to be quarrelled with, but submitted to. (2.) We must pray to him, with a believing expectation to receive mercy from him; for that is implied in our lifting up our hands to him, (a gesture commonly used in prayer,) and sometimes put forth, as, (Ps. cxxi. 2.) Let the lifting up of my hands be acceptable in thy sight. It signifies our requesting mercy from him, and our readiness to receive that mercy. (3.) Our hearts must go along with our prayers; we must lift up our hearts with our hands, as we must pour out our souls with our words. It is the heart that God looks at in that, and every other service; for what will a sacrifice without a heart avail? If inward impressions be not in some measure answerable to outward expressions, we do but mock God, and deceive ourselves. Pray- ing is lifting up the soul to God, (Ps. xxxv. 1.) as to our Father in heaven; and the soul that hopes to be with God in heaven for ever, will thus, by frequent acts of devotion, be still learning the way there, and pressing forward in that way.

42. We have transgressed, and have rebelled: thou hast not pardoned. 43. Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us: thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied. 44. Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through. 45. Thou hast made us as the offscouring and refuse in the midst of the people. 46. All our enemies have opened their mouths against us. 47. Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction. 48. Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people. 49. Mine eye tricketh down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission. 50. Till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven. 51. Mine eye affecteth my heart, because of all the daughters of my city. 52. Mine enemies chased me sore, like a bird, without cause. 53. They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me. 54. Waters flowed over my head; then I said, I am cut off.

It is easier to chide ourselves for complaining than to chide ourselves out of it: the prophet had owned that a living man should not complain, as if he checked himself for his complaints in the former part of the chapter; and yet here the clouds return after the rain, and the wounds bleed afresh; for great
pains must be taken with a troubled spirit, to bring it into temper.

I. They confess the righteousness of God in afflicting them; (v. 42.) We have transgressed and have rebelled. Note, It becomes us, when we are in trouble, to justify God, by owning our sins, and laying the load upon ourselves for them. Call sin a transgression, call it a rebellion, and you do not misclassify it. This is the result of their searching and the less they inquire into them, the worse they found them.

II. Yet they complain of the afflictions they are under, not without some reflections upon God, which we are not to imitate, but, under the sharpest trials, must always think and speak highly and kindly of him.

1. They complain of his frowns, and the tokens of his displeasure against them. Their sins were repeated of, and yet, (v. 42.) Thou hast not pardoned. They had not the assurance and comfort of the pardon; the judgments brought upon them for their sins were not removed, and therefore they thought they could not say the sin was pardoned, which was a mistake, but a common mistake with the people of God when their souls are cast down, and disquieted within them. Their case was really pitiable, a case, to which the saints should often come down, (v. 43.) Their enemies persecuted and slew them, but that was not the worst of it, they were but the instruments in God's hands; "Thou hast persecuted us, and thou hast slain us, though we expected thou shouldst have protected and delivered us." They complain that there was a wall of partition between them and God, and, (1.) This hindered God's favours from coming down upon them; The reflection of the beams of God's kindness to them, used to be the beauty of Israel; but now thou hast covered us with anger, so that our glory is concealed and gone; now God is angry with us, and we do not appear that illustrious people that we have formerly been thought to be." Or, "Thou hast covered us up as men that are buried or covered up and forgotten." (2.) It hindered their prayers from coming up to God; (v. 44.) "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud;" not like that bright cloud in which he took possession of the temple, which enabled the worshippers to draw near to him, but like that in which he came down upon mount Sinai, which obliged the people to stand at a distance. "This cloud is so thick, that our prayers seem as if they were lost in it, they cannot pass through, we cannot obtain an audience." The mostוגeous trembles at the thought of this. Such clouds are sometimes a temptation, even to praying people, to question whether God be what they have always believed him to be, a prayer-hearing God.

2. They complain of the contempt of their neighbours, and the reproach and ignominy they were under; (v. 43.) Thou hast made us as the scoffers, or, scandalizing of the first floor, which are thrown to the dunghill. This St. Paul refers to, in his answer to the heathen Jews who were at Athens, when in their temple, (v. 13.) We are made as the filth of the world, and are the scoffers and reproachers of all things. "We are the refuse, or dross, in the midst of the people, trodden upon by every body, and looked upon as the vilest of the nations, and good for nothing but to be cast out as salt which has lost its savour. Our enemies have opened their mouths against us, (v. 46.) have gaped upon us to seek our shame; and they have kept their mouths at us; or have taken liberty to say what they please of us;" these complaints we had before, ch. ii. 15, 16. Note, It is common for base and ill-natured men to run upon, and run down, those that are fallen into the depths of distress from the height of honour. But this they brought upon themselves by sin; if they had not made themselves vile, their enemies could not have made them so; but there-
the sufferings of saints; our Lord Jesus was so; for when he came near, he beheld this same city, and wept over it, which the daughters of Jerusalem did not. (2.) She is overwhelmed with fears; not only grieves for what is, but fears worse, and gives up all for gone; (v. 54.) "Then I said, I am cut off, ruined, and see no hope of recovery; I am as one dead." Note, Those that are cast down, are commonly too apt to think themselves cast off, Ps. xxxiii. 22. Jon. iii. 4.

4. In the midst of these sad complaints here is one word of comfort, by which it appears that their case was not altogether so bad as they made it, v. 50. We continue thus weeping till the Lord look down and behold from heaven. This intimates, (1.) That they were satisfied that God's gracious regard to them in their miseries would be an effectual remedy of all their grievances; "If God, who now covers himself with a cloud, as if he took no notice of our troubles, (Job xxxii. 13.) would but shine forth, all would be well; if he look upon us, we shall be saved," Ps. lxxx. 19. Dan. ix. 17. Bad as the case is, one favourable look from heaven will set all to rights. (2.) That they had hopes that he would at length have a gracious regard to them, (3.) Though they might not for a while, but for a season, expect it, for granted that he will; "Though he contend long, he will not contend for ever, though we deserve that he should." (3.) That while they continued weeping they continued waiting; and neither did nor would expect relief and succour from any hand but his; nothing shall comfort them but his gracious returns, nor shall any thing wipe tears from their eyes till he look down. Their eyes, which now run down with water, shall still wait upon the Lord their God until that he have mercy upon them, Ps. xii. 2.

55. I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon. 56. Thou hast heard my voice; hide not thine ear at my brightness, at my cry. 57. Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not. 58. O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life. 59. O Lord, thou hast seen my wrong; judge thou my cause. 60. Thou hast seen all their vengeance, and all their imaginations against me. 61. Thou hast heard their reproach, O Lord, and all their imaginations against me; 62. The lips of those that rose up against me, and their device against me all the day. 63. Behold their sitting down, and their rising up; I am their music. 64. Render unto them a recompense, O Lord, according to the work of their hands. 65. Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them. 66. Persecute and destroy them in anger from under the heavens of the Lord.

We may observe throughout this chapter a struggle in the prophet's breast between sense and faith, fear and hope; he complains and then comforts himself, yet drops his complaints, and returns again to his complaints, as Ps. xlii. But as there, so here, faith gets the last word, and comes off a conqueror, for in these verses he concludes with some comfort. And here are two things with which he comforts himself.

1. His experience of God's goodness even in his affliction. This may refer to the prophet's personal experience, with which he encourages himself in reference to the public troubles. He that has seasonably succoured particular saints, will not fail the church in general. Or, it may include the remnant of good people that were among the Jews, who had found it not in vain to wait upon God. In three things the prophet and his pious friends had found God good to them: 1. He had not forsaken them; though they had been ready to fear that the cloud of wrath was such as their prayers could not pass through, (v. 44.) yet, upon second thoughts, at least upon further trial, they find it otherwise, and that God had not said unto them, Seek ye me in vain. When they were in the low dungeon, as free among the dead, they called upon God's name; (v. 53.) their weeping did not hinder praying. Note, Though we are cast into ever so deep a dungeon, we may from thence find a way to access to God in the highest heavens; Out, of the depths have I cried unto thee, (Ps. cxxx. 1.) as Jonah out of the whale's belly. And could God hear them out of the low dungeon, and would he? Yes, he did; Thou hast heard my voice; and some read the following words as carrying on the same thankful acknowledgment; "If God would hear the distresses of his people, he would hear my cry; and the original will bear that reading. We read it as a petition for further audience; Hide not thine ear. God's having heard our voice when we cried to him, even out of the low dungeon, is an encouragement for us to hope that he will not at any time hide his ear. Observe how he calls prayer his breathing; for in prayer we breathe toward God. We breathe air and thought, and thought and prayer, cannot be abrid, but only breathe in groanings that cannot be uttered, yet we shall not be neglected, if we be sincere. Prayer is the breath of the new man, sucking in the air of mercy in petitions, and returning it in praises; it is both the evidence and the maintenance of the spiritual life. Some read it, at my gasping; "When I lay gasping for life, and ready to expire, and thought I was breathing my last, thou didst take cognizance of my distressed case." We had silenced their fears, and quieted their spirits; (v. 57.) "Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee; thou didst graciously assure me of thy presence with me, and give me to see thee nigh unto me, whereas I had thought thee to be at a distance from me." Note, When we draw nigh to God in a way of duty, we may by faith expect his presence with us, in a way of mercy; but this was not all; Thou saidst, Fear not. This was the language of God's prophets preaching to them not to fear, (Isa. xli. 13.) of his providence preventing those things which they were afraid of, and of his grace quieting their minds, and making them easy, by the witness of his Spirit with their spirits, that they were his people called, though in distress, and therefore ought not to fear. 3. He had already begun to appear for them; (v. 58.) "O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul," (that is, as it follows,) "thou hast redeemed my life," hast rescued that out of the hands of those who would have taken it away, hast saved that when it was ready to be swallowed up, hast given them that for a prey." And this is an encouragement to the distressed, that he would yet further appear for them; "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, and therefore wilt deliver my feet from falling; thou hast pleaded the causes of my life, and therefore wilt plead my other causes."
deal." He that knows all things, knew, (1.) The malice they had against him; "Thou hast seen all their vengeance; how they desire to do me mischief, as if it were by way of reprisal for some great injury I had done them." Note, We should consider, to our terror and caution, that God knows all the revengeful thoughts we have in our minds against others, and therefore we should not allow of such thoughts, or harbour them: and that he knows all the revengeful thoughts others have causeth in their minds against us, and therefore we should not be afraid of them, but leave it to him to protect us from them. (2.) The designs and projects they had had to do him mischief; "Thou hast seen all their imaginations against me," (v. 66,) and again, (v. 61.) They are "wholly one in their imaginations against me," both the desire and the device they have to ruin me; whether it show itself in word or deed, it is known to thee; may, though the products of it are not to be seen or heard, yet their device against me all the day is perceived and understood by him to whom all things are naked and open. 

Note, The most secret contrivances of the church's enemies are perfectly known to the church. He that knew all things knew, (3.) The contempt and calumny wherewith they led him, all that they spake slightly of him, and all that they spake reproachfully; "Thou hast heard their reproach," (v. 61.) all the bad characters they give him, laying to my charge things that I know not; all the methods they use to make me odious and contemptible, even the lips of those that rose up against me, (v. 62.) the malicious reproaches they use towards me, and that at their sitting down and rising up, when they lie down at night, and get up in the morning, when they sit down to their meat, and with their company, and when they rise from both, still I am their music, they make themselves and one another merry with my miseries, as the Philistines made sport with Samson. Jerusalem was the subject they played upon; perhaps they had some tune or play, some opera or interlude, that was called the destruction of Jerusalem, which though in the nature of a tragedy, was very entertaining to those who wished ill to the holy city. Note, God will one day call sinners to an account for all the hard speeches which they have spoken against him and his people, Jude 15. 

3. He appeals to God's judgment upon this fact, "Lord, thou hast seen my wrong; there is no need of any evidence to prove it, or any prosecutor to enforce and aggravate it, then seest it in its true colours; and now I leave it with thee, judge thou my cause," (v. 59.) Let them be dealt with," (1.) "As they deserve; (v. 64.) Render to them a recompense according to the work of their hands. Let them be dealt with as they have dealt with us; let thy hand be against them as their hand has been against us. They have created us a great deal of vexation; now, Lord, give them sorrow of heart; (v. 65.) perplexity of heart;" (so some read it;) "let them be surrounded with threatening mischiefs on all sides, and not be able to see their way out; give them despondency of heart;" (so others read it;) "let them be driven to despair, and give themselves up to grief; let the hands that have dealt with us be themselves cut off, and sink the heart that thinks itself stoutest. (2.) "Let them be dealt with according to the threatenings; Thy curse unto them; let thy curse come upon them, all the evils that are pronounced in the word against the enemies of thy people, v. 65. They have loaded us with curses; as they loved cursing, so let it come upon them, thy curse which will make them truly miserable. Thine is causeless, and therefore fruitless, it shall not come; but thine is just, and shall take effect; these when thou cursest are cursed indeed. Let the curse be executed, v. 66. Persecute and destroy them in anger, as they persecute and destroy us in their anger. Destroy them from under the heavens of the Lord, let them have no benefit of the light and influence of the heavens. Destroy them in such a manner, that all who see it may say, It is a destruction from the Almighty, who sits in the heavens and laughs at them, (Ps. ii. 4,) and may own that the heavens do rule," (Dan. iv. 26.) What is said of the idols is here said of their worshippers, (who in this also shall be like unto them.) They shall perish from under these heavens, Jer. x. 11. They shall not be only excluded from the happiness of the invisible heavens, but cut off from the comfort even of these calamities, which are the heavens of the Lord, (Ps. cxv. 16,) and which they therefore are unworthy to be taken under the protection of, who rebel against him.

CHAP. IV. 

This chapter is another single alphabet of Lamentations for the destruction of Jerusalem, like those in the two first chapters. I. The prophet here laments the injuries and indignities done to those to whom respect used to be showed, v. 1, 2. II. He laments the direful effects of the famine to which they were reduced by the siege, v. 3, 10. III. He laments the taking and sacking of Jerusalem, and its amazing desolations, v. 11, 12. IV. He acknowledges that the sins of their leaders were the cause of all these calamities, v. 13, 14. V. He gives up all as doomed to utter ruin, for their enemies were every way too hard for them, v. 17, 20. VI. He foretells the destruction of the Edomites who triumphed in Jerusalem's fall, v. 21. VII. He foretells the return of the captivity of Zion at last, v. 22.

1. HOW is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street. 2. The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter! 3. Even the sea-monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones; the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. 4. The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst; the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them. 5. They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets; they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills. 6. For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her. 7. Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire; 8. Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets; their skin cleaveth to their bones it is withered, it is become like a stick. 9. They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger; for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field. 10. The bands of the pitable women have sodden their own chil
children, they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people. 11. The Lord hath accomplished his fury; he hath poured out his fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof. 12. The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem.

The elegy in this chapter begins with a lamentation of the very sad and doleful change which the judgments of God had made in Jerusalem. The city that had been as gold, as the most fine gold, so rich and splendid, the perfection of beauty, and the joy of the whole earth, is become dim, and is changed, has lost its lustre, lost its value, is not what it was, it is become dress. Alas, what an alteration is here!

1. The temple is laid waste, which was the glory of Jerusalem and its protection; it is given up into the hands of the enemy. As some understand the gold spoken of, (v. 1.) to be the gold of the temple, the vast building that was burned, the face of the fire, and were poured out, and thrown about in the top of every street, they lay mingled without distinction among the common refuse. When the God of the sanctuary was by sin provoked to withdraw, no wonder that the stones of the sanctuary were thus profaned.

2. The princes and priests who were in a special manner the sons of Zion, were trampled upon and abused, v. 2. Both the house of God and the house of David were in Zion; the sons of both those houses were upon this account precious, that they were heirs to the privileges of those two covenants of priesthood and royalty; they were comparable to fine gold; Israel was more rich in them than in treasures of gold and silver; but now they are esteemed as earthen pitchers; they are broken as earthen pitchers; and it is a wondrous thing, that as these vessels, in which there is no favour, they are grown poor, and brought into captivity, and thereby are rendered mean and despised, and every one treads upon them, and insults over them. Note, The contempt put upon God's people ought to be matter of lamentation to us.

3. Little children were starved for want of bread and milk; v. 5, 6. The nursing-mothers, having no meat for themselves, had no milk for the babies at their breast, so that though in disposition they were really compassionate, yet in fact they seemed to be cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness, that leave their eggs in the dust; (Job xxxix. 14, 15.) having no food for their children, they were forced to neglect them, and do what they could to forget them, because it was a pain to them to think of them when they had nothing for them; in this they were worse than the seals, or sea-monsters, or whales, (as some render it,) for they drew out the breast, and gave suck to their young, which the daughter of my people will not do. Children cannot shift for themselves as grown people can; and therefore it was more painful to see the tongue of the sucking-child cleave to the roof of his mouth for thirst, because there was not a drop of water to moisten it; and to hear the young children, that could but just speak, ask bread of their parents, who had none to give them, no, nor any friend that could supply them. As doleful as our thoughts are of this case, so thankful should our thoughts be of the great plenty we enjoy, and the food convenient we have for ourselves and for our children, and for those of our own house.

4. Persons of good rank were reduced to extreme poverty, v. 5. They who were well-born and well-bred, and had many accomplishments, were now driven to beg for bread or clothing, who had fed delicately, had every thing that was curious and nice, (they call it eating well,) whereas those only eat well, who eat to the glory of God, and were sated sumptuously every day; they had not only been advanced to the scarlet, but from their beginning were brought up in scarlet, and were never acquainted with any thing mean or common. (Hos. vi. 1.) A woman is to be valued only by her husband, and she is then the most valuable thing in the house; (the word is,) their foot-chests, and the surplice they walked on, were scarlet, yet these, being stripped of all by the war, are desolate in the streets, have not a house to put their head in, not a bed to lie on, nor clothes to cover them, nor fire to warm them. They embrace dunghills, on them they are glad to lie, to get a little rest; and perhaps ranked in the dunghills for something to eat, as the prophet saw who wrote the preceding lines.

5. Persons who were in the greatest pomp and plenty, know not what straits they may be reduced to before they die; as sometimes the needy are raised out of the dunghill, (Ps. cxviii. 7.) so there are instances of the wealthy being brought to the dunghill. Those who were full, have hired out themselves for bread, 1 Sam. ii. 5. It is therefore the wisdom of those who have abundance, not to use themselves too nicely, for then hardships, when they come, will be doubtfully 56. 5. Persons who were eminent for dignity, may, perhaps, for sanctity, shared with others in the common calamity, v. 7, 8. Her Nazarites are extremely changed. Some understand it only of her honourable ones, the young gentlemen, who were very clean, and neat, and well-dressed, washed and perfumed; but I see not why we may not understand it of those devout people among them, who separated themselves to the Lord by the Nazarites' vow. Num. vi. 2. That there were such among them in the most degenerate times, appears, Amos ii. 11. I raised up of your young men for Nazarites. These Nazarites, though they were not to cut their hair, yet, by reason of their temperate diet, their frequent washings, and the habit of prayer, they had been in devoting themselves to God, and conversing with him, which made their faces to shine as Moses', were fairer than snow, and whiter than milk; drinking no wine nor strong drink, they had a more healthful complexion and cheerful countenance than those who regaled themselves wholly with the blood of the grape, as Daniel and his fellows with jard and water. On the contrary of their great ascetic and mortification which all good people had for them; though perhaps to the eye they had no form or comeliness, yet, being separated to the Lord, they were valued as if they had been more ruddy than rubies, and their polishing had been as sapphire. But now their visage is marred, (as is said of Christ, Isa. li. 14.) it is blacker than a coal, they look miserably, pale, and faint; and though they are not grief and perplexity; they are not known in the streets, they who respected them now take no notice of them, and they who had been intimately acquainted with them now scarcely knew them, their countenance was so altered by the miseries that attended the long siege. Their skin teareth to their bones, their flesh being quite consumed and wasted away; it is withered, it is become like a stick, as dry and hard as a piece of wood. Note, It is a thing to
LAMENTATIONS, IV.

6. Jerusalem comes down slowly, and dies a lingering death, for the famine contributes more to her destruction than any other judgment whatsoever. Upon this account, the destruction of Jerusalem was greater than that of Sodom, (v. 6.) for that was overthrown; and here she was not only despatched, but left to stand and be tormented as long, and be of the same kind of execution, Judg. viii. 21. Jerusalem is kept in this state of being at home for some months upon the rack, in pain and misery, and dies by inches, dies so as to feel herself die. And when the iniquity of Jerusalem is magnified above all previous iniquities, that of Sodom, no wonder that the punishment of it is so. Sodom, no wonder that the punishment of its was more intolerable than that of Sodom, xxxv. 12. Jerusalem has no means of grace that Jerusalem had, the oracles of God, and his prophets, and therefore the condemnation of Jerusalem will be more intolerable than that of Sodom,Matth. xi. 23, 24.

The extremity of the famine is here set forth by two things: 1. The sufferings the inhabitants of it undergo. (1.) The tedious deaths that it was the cause of; (v. 9.) many were slain with hunger, their stores being spent, and the public stores so nearly spent, that they could not have any relief out of them; they were stricken, for want of the fruits of the field; they who were starved were as sure to die as if they had been stabbed and stricken through; only their case was much more miserable; they who are stricken with the sword, are soon rid out of their pain, in a moment they go down to the grave; (Job xxi. 13.) they have not the terror of seeing death make its advances toward them, but feel it when the blow is given; it is but one sharp struggle, and the work is done. And if we be ready for another world, we need not be afraid of a short passage to it; the quicker the better. But the who die by famine pine away, hunger press upon their spirits, and wastes them gradually, may and frets their spirits, and fills them with vexation, and is as great a torture to the mind as to the body. There are hands in their death, Ps. lxix. 34. (2.) The barbarous murders that it was the occasion of; (v. 10.) The hands of the pitiful have first slain, and then solden, their own children. This was lamented before; (Eph. vii. 26.) and it was a thing to be greatly lamented; that any should be so wicked as to do it, and that they should be brought to such extremities as to be tempted to it. But this horrid effect of long sieges had been threatened in general, (Lev. xxvi. 29. Deut. xxviii. 53.) and particularly against Jerusalem in the siege of the Chaldeans, Jer. xix. 9. Ezek. v. 10. The case was sad enough that they had not where to go to make their rest, nor to seek for them, (v. 4.) but much worse that they could find in their hearts to feed upon their children, and make meat of them. I know not whether to make it an instance of the power of necessity, or of the power of iniquity; but as the Gentile idolaters were justly given up to vile affections, (Rom. i. 26.) so these Jewish idolaters, and the women particularly, who had made idols to the queen of heaven, and their children to do so too, were stripped of natural affection, and that to their own children. Being thus left to dishonour their own nature, was a righteous judgment upon them for the dishonour they have done to God.

7. Jerusalem comes down utterly and wonderfully. (1.) The destruction of Jerusalem is a complete destruction; (v. 11.) The Lord has accomplished his fury, he has made thorough work of it, he has executed all that he purposed in wrath against Jerusalem, and has wrought no less upon the sentence. He has poured out the full vials of his fierce anger, poured them out to the bottom, even the dregs of them. He has kindled a fire in Zion, which has not only consumed the houses, and levelled them with the ground, but, beyond what other fires do, has devoured the foundations thereof, as if they were in a fire more built upon. (2.) It is an amazing destruction, v. 12. We are assured to the kings of the earth, who are acquainted with, and inquisitive about, the state of their neighbours; nay, it was so to all the inhabitants of the world, who knew Jerusalem, or had ever heard or read of it; they could not have believed that the adversary and enemy should ever have entered into the gates of Jerusalem; for, [1.] They knew that Jerusalem was strongly fortified, not only by walls and bulwarks, but by the numbers and strength of its inhabitants; the strong hold of Zion was thought to be impregnable. [2.] They knew that it was the city of the great King, where the whole earth had in a more peculiar manner his residence; it was the holy city, and therefore they thought that it was so much under the divine protection, that it could be in vain for any of its enemies to make an attack upon it. [3.] They knew that many an attempt made upon it had been baffled, witness that of Sennacherib. They were therefore amazed when they heard of the Chaldeans making themselves masters of it, and concluded that it was certainly by an immediate hand of God that Jerusalem was given up to them; it was by a commission from him that the enemy broke through, and entered the gates of Jerusalem.

13. For the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her. They have wandered as blind men in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood, so that men could not touch their garments. They cried unto them, Depart ye; it is unclean; depart, depart, touch not: when they fled away and wandered, they said among the heathen, They shall no more sojourn there. The anger of the Lord hath divided them; he will no more regard them: they respected not the persons of the priests, they favoured not the elders. As for us, our eyes as yet failed for our vain help: in our watching we have watched for a nation that could not save us. They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets: our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come. Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven: they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness. The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.

We have here,

1. The sins they are charged with, for which God brought this destruction upon them, and which serve to justify God in his, (v. 13, 14.) It is for the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests,
not that the people were innocent, no, they loved to have it so, (Jer. v. 31.) and it was to please them that the prophets and priests did as they did; but the fault is chiefly laid upon them who should have taught them better, should have reproofed and admonished them, and told them what would be in the end; but of the hundreds of those watchmen who did not give them warning, will their blood be required. Note, Nothing ripens a people more for ruin, nor fills the measure faster, than the sins of their priests and prophets. The particular sin charged upon them is, persecution; the false prophets and corrupt priests joined their power and interest to shed the blood of the just in the midst of the land, that the names of God and his people might be abhorred from them: they not only shed the blood of their innocent children, whom they sacrificed to Moloch, but the blood of the righteous men that were among them, whom they sacrificed to that more cruel idol of enmity to the truth and true religion. This was that sin which the Lord would not pardon, (2 Kings xxiv. 4.) and which brought the last destruction upon Jerusalem; (Jamb. v. 6.) ye have condemned and killed the just. And the priests and prophets were the ringleaders in persecution, as in Christ's time the chief priests and scribes were the men that incensed the people against him, who otherwise would have persisted in their holiness. Now these are they that were slandered blind men in the streets; (v. 14.) they would not touch their instruments; they thought every thing that is good, but to do evil they were quick-sighted. God says of corrupt judges, They know not, neither do they understand, they walk in darkness; (Ps. Lxxxi. 5.) and Christ says of the corrupt teachers, They are blind leaders of the blind, Matt. xvi. 14. They have so polluted themselves with innocent blood, the blood of the saints, that men could not touch their instruments; they thought scribes so odious to all about them, that so good men were as shy of touching them as of touching a dead body, which contracted a ceremonial pollution; or of touching the bloody clothes of one slain, which tender spirits dare not to do. There is nothing that will make prophets and priests to be abhorred so much as a spirit of persecution.

Thus it was, that far or near neighbours produced in them a spirit of revenge against those who spoke against them, and to show the equity of God's proceedings against them. Some that are grown very impudent in sin, boast that they care not what people say of them; but God, by the prophet, would have the Jews to take notice of what people said of them, and what was the opinion of the standers-by concerning them; (v. 15, 16.) what they said, may, we may say, be esteemed with them, especially to the corrupt priests and prophets, among the heathen. (1.) They upbraided them with their pretended purity, while they lived in all manner of real iniquity. They cried to them, Depart ye, it is uncleane. You were so precise, you would not touch a Gentile, but cried, Depart, depart, stand by thyself, I am holier than thou, Isa. lxv. 1. You would condemn them to go into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled. But can you now keep the Gentiles from touching you, when God has delivered you into their hands? When you fly away and wander, you will bid them stand off, and not touch you, because you are uncleane; but in vain, these serpents will not be charmed or enchanted thus, or they will not retract their denunciation of you, nor would they for all the world, the most venerable persons will to them be despicable. (2.) They upbraided them with their sins, and the anger of God against them for their sins, and the direful effects of that anger. They cried to them, Depart ye, it is uncleane; they all cried out shame on them, and could easily foresee that God would not long suffer so provoking a people to continue in so good a land. They knew their statutes and judgments were righteous, and expected they should be a wise and understanding people, Deut. iv. 6. But when they saw them quite otherwise, they cried, Depart, depart; they soon read their doom, that the land should be made desolate, as it had done their predecessors, and when they saw the dispersed of Jacob fleeing and wandering, they told them of it. They said, Now the anger of the Lord has divided them, has dispersed them into all countries, because they respected not the persons of the priests, the priests that were among them, such as Zecharias the son of Jehiel, Jerekiah, and others, whom God had made wise, and in whom he had put his spirit, but despised them and their authority, when they went about to check them for their vicious courses; the very heathen foresaw this would ruin them. (3.) They triumphed in their ruin as irrecoverable. They said, when they saw them expelled out of their own land, Now they shall no more sojourn there, they have bidden it a final farewell, never more to return to it, for God will no more regard them; and how then can they help themselves? Herein they were mistaken, God had not cast them off, for all this; yet thus much is intimated, that all about them observed them to be so very provoking to their God, that there was no reason to expect any other, than that they should be quite abandoned.

3. The despair which they themselves were almost brought to is ascribed to the high joy and confidence which they said they discovered among the heathen, let us now hear what they say concerning themselves; (v. 17.) "As for us, we look upon our case to be in a manner helpless. Our end is near, (v. 18.) the end both of our church and of our state; we are at just the brink of the ruin of both; nay, our end is come, we are utterly undone, a fatal, final period is over, and all our comforts, the days of our prosperity are fulfilled, they are numbered and finished." Thus their fears concurred with the hopes of their enemies, that the Lord would no more regard them. For, (1.) The refuges they fled to disappointed them. They looked for help from this and the other powerful ally, but to no purpose, it proved vain help, the succours they expected did not come in, or at least did not come at all as they expected, and their eyes failed with looking to that which never came; (v. 17.) they watched in watching, they watched long, and with a great deal of earnestness and impatience, for a nation that promised them assistance, but failed them, and frustrated their expectations, they could not save them, they were too weak to contend with the Chaldean army, and therefore were reigned. Help from creatures is vain help, (Ps. lx. 11.) and we may look for it till our eyes fail, till our hearts fail, and come short of it at last. (2.) The persecutors they fled from overtook them, and overcame them; (v. 18.) They hunt our steps, that we cannot go into our streets. When the Chaldeans besieged the city, they raised their batteries so high above the walls, that they might command all that passed or came, or went along the streets; they hunt and destroy them with their arrows from place to place. When the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, their persecutors were swifter than the eagles of heaven when they fly upon their prey, (v. 19.) there was an escaping them; they pursued them upon the mountains, and when they thought they had got clear of them, they found that they had laid wait for them in the wilderness, to cut off their retreat, and to pick up stragglers; nay, the king himself, though he may be supposed to have all the advantages the exigence of the case would admit to favour his flight, yet he cannot escape, for divine vengeance pursues him with them, and then, (v.)
20. The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits. Some apply it to Josiah, who was killed in battle by the king of Egypt; but it is rather to be understood of Zedekiah, who was the last king of the house of David, and who was pursued by the Chaldeans, and put to death in the ninth year of Nebuchadnezzar. Jer. xxxix. 5. He was the anointed of the Lord, heir of that family which God had appointed to the government; he was very much confided in by the Jewish state; they said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen; they promised themselves that the remnant which were left after Jeconiah's captivity, should, under the protection of his government, yet be delivered from all the fruits of their repentance. They thought, though they were so reduced that they could not think of reigning over the heathen, as they had done, yet they might make a shift to live among them, and not be insulted and pulled to pieces by them. Thus apt are sinking interests not only to catch at every twig, but to think it will recover them. Jerusalem died of a consumption, a flattering distemper; even when she was ready to expire she formed some hopeful symptoms to herself, and on them grounded a hope that she should recover; but what came of it? The shadow, under which they thought they should live, proved like that of Jonah's gourd, which withered in a night. He that was the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, as if he had been but a beast of prey; so little account did they make of a person deemed sacred and not to be violated! Note, When we make any creature the breath of our nostrils, and promise ourselves that we shall live by it, it is just with God to stop that breath, and deprive us of the life we expected by it, for God will have the honour of being himself alone our Life, and the Length of our days.

21. Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz: the cup also shall pass through unto thee; thou shalt be drunken, and shall make thyself naked. 22. The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity: he will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; he will discover thy sins.

David's psalms of lamentation commonly conclude with some word of comfort, which is as life from the dead, and light shining out of darkness; so does this lamentation here in this chapter. The people of God are now in great distress, their aspects all dautful, their prospects all frightful, and their ill-natured neighbours the Edomites insult over them, and do all they can to exasperate their destroyers against them; such was their violence against their brother Jacob, (Obad. 10.) such their spleen at Jerusalem, of which they cried, Raze it, raze it, Ps. cxxxvii. 7. Now it is here foretold, for the encouragement of God's people, 1. That an end shall be put to Zion's troubles; (v. 22.) The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; not the fulness of that punishment which it deserves, but of that which God has designed and determined to inflict, and which was necessary to answer the end, the glorifying of God's justice, and the taking away of their sin. The captivity, which is the punishment of thine iniquity, is accomplished, (Isa. xi. 2.) and he will no longer be a captivity; so it may be rendered, as well as, he will no more carry thee into captivity, he will turn again thy captivity, and work a glorious release for thee. Note, The troubles of God's people shall be continued no longer than till they have done their work for which they were sent.

2. That an end shall be put to Edom's triumphs. It is spoken ironically; (v. 21.) Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, go on to insult over Zion in distress, till thou hast filled up the measure of thine iniquity; do so, rejoice in thy own present exception from the common fate of thy neighbours. This is like Solomon's upbraiding the young man with his ungodly mirth, (Eccles. xi. 9.) Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; rejoice, if thou canst, when God comes to reckon with thee, and that he will do ere long; the cup of trembling, which it is now Jerusalem's turn to drink deep of, shall pass through unto thee, it shall go round till it comes to thy lot to pledge it. Note, This is a good reason why we should not insist over any people who are in misery, because we ourselves also are in the body, and we know not how soon their case may be ours. But those who please themselves in the calamities of God's church, must expect to have their doom, as aiders and abettors, with them that are instrumental in those calamities. The destruction of the Edomites was foretold by this prophet; (Jer. xlix. 7, 8.) and the people of God must encourage themselves against their present rudeness and insolence with the prospect of it. (1.) It will be a shameful destruction; This cup that shall pass unto thee shall intoxicate thee; (that is) shame enough to any man; thou shalt be drunken, quite infatuated, and at thy wits end, shalt stagger in all thy counsels, and stumble in all thy enterprises, and know not what to do, as Noah, when we drink noah's wine and make thyself naked, and expose thyself to contempt. Note, Those who ridicule God's people, will justly be left to themselves to do that, some time or other, by which they will be made ridiculous. (2.) It will be a righteous destruction; God will herein visit thine iniquity, and discover thy sins; he will punish them, and, to justify himself therein, he will discover them, and make it to appear that he only justly causes thus to proceed against them. Nay, the punishment of the sin shall so exactly answer the sin, that it shall itself plainly discover it. Sometimes God does so visit the iniquity, that he that runs may read the sin in the punishment. But, sooner or later, sin will be visited and discovered, and all the hidden works of darkness brought to light.

CHAP. V.

This chapter, though it has the same number of verses with the 1st, 2nd, and 4th, is not alphabetical, as they were, but the scope of it is the same with that of all the foregoing elegies. We have in it, I. A representation of the present situation of Judah in their captivity, v. 1. II. A protestation of their concern for God's sanctuary, as that which lay nearer their heart than any secular interest of their own, v. 17. III. A humble application to God, and expostulation with him, for the returns of mercy; (v. 19–22.) for they that lament, and do not pray, sin in their lamentations. Some ancient versions call this chapter, The Prayer of Jeremiah. 1. REmember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider, and be hold our reproof. 2. Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens. 3. We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows. 4. We have drunken our water for money; our wood is sold unto us. 5. Our necks are under persecution: we labour, and have no rest. 6. We have given the hand to the Egyptians, and to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread. 7. Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities. 8. Servants have ruled over us: there is none that doth
deliver us out of their hand. 9. We gain our bread with the peril of our lives, because of the sword of the wilderness. 10. Our skin was black like an oven, because of the terrible famine. 11. They ravished the women in Zion, and the maids in the cities of Judah. 12. Princes are hanged up by their hand: the faces of elders were not honoured. 13. They took the young men to grind, and the children fell under the wood. 14. The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their music. 15. The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning. 16. The crown is fallen from our head: we are unto us that we have sinned!

Is any afflicted? Let him pray; and let him in prayer pour out his complaint to God, and make known before him his trouble; the people of God do so here being overwhelmed with grief; they give vent to their sorrows at the footstool of the throne of grace, and so give themselves ease: they complain not of evils feared, but of evils felt; "Remember what is come upon us; (v. 1.) what was of old threatened against us, and was long in the coming; is now at length come upon us, and we are ready to acknowledge the fault;" (Ps. cxliii. 9.) Jeremiah, referring to God's spiritual Israel, but the heavenly Canaan is an inheritance that they cannot be dispossessed of, that shall never be turned to strangers.

1. They acknowledge the reproach of sin which they hear, the reproach of their youth, (which Ephraim bemoans himself for, Jer. xxxi. 19.) of the early days of their nation. This comes in, in the midst of their complaints, (v. 7.) but may well be put in the front of them; Our fathers have sinned, and are not, they are dead and gone, but we have borne their iniquities. This is not here a peevish complaint, or an imputation of unrighteousness to God, like that which we have, Jer. xxxi. 29. Ezek. xviii. 2. "The fathers did eat unclean grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge, and therefore the wrath of the Lord is not equal; but it is a potent confession of the sins of their ancestors, which they themselves also had persisted in, for which they now justly suffered; the judgments God brought upon them were so very great, that it appeared that God had in them an eye to the sins of their ancestors, (because they had not been remarkably punished in this world,) as well as to their own sins; and thus God was justified both in his comination at their ancestors, (he laid up their iniquity for their children,) and in his severity with them, on whom he visited that iniquity, Matt. xxviii. 33, 36. Thus they do here, 1. Submit themselves to the divine justice; "Lord, thou art just in all that is brought upon us, for we are a seed of evil-doers, children of wrath, and heirs of the curse: we are sinful, and we have it by kind." Note, The sins which God looks back upon in punishing we must look back upon in repenting, and must take notice of all that will help to justify God in correcting us.

They refer the reproaches to the divine name; "Lord, our fathers have sinned, and we justly smart for their sins; but they are not, they were taken away from the evil to come, they lived not to see and share in these miseries that are come upon us, and we are left to bear their iniquities; now, though herein God is righteous, yet it must be owned that our case is pitiable, and worthy of compassion. Note, If we be bereft of what is good under what quarters, we may expect that he who punishes will pity, and will soon return in mercy to us. 11. They represent the reproach of trouble which they bear, in divers particulars, which tend much to their disgrace.

1. They are dispossessed of that good land which God gave them, and their enemies have got possession of it, v. 2. Canaan was their inheritance, it was theirs by promise, God gave it to them and their seed, and they held it by grant from his crown; (Ps. cxxxvi. 21, 22.) but now, "It is turned to strangers, they possess it, who have no right to it, who are strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and aliens to the covenants of promise, they dwell in the house that we built, and in the vineyard that we purchased;" (Is. xvi. 5.) In the hands of the Egyptians, and in the bosom of the Gentiles, God's spiritual Israel, but the heavenly Canaan is an inheritance that they cannot be dispossessed of, that shall never be turned to strangers.

2. Their state and nation are brought into a condition like that of widows and orphans; (v. 3.) "We are fatherless, helpless, we have none to protect us, to provide for us, to take any care of us, as one who is the father of the country, is cut off; now, God our Father seems to have forsaken us and cast us off; our mothers, our cities, that were as fruitful mothers in Israel, are now as widows, are as wives whose husbands are dead, destitute of comfort, and exposed to wrong and injury, and this is our reproach; for we who made a figure, are now locked on with contempt."

They put hard to it to provide necessaries for themselves and their families, whereas once they lived in abundance, and had plenty of everything. Water used to be free and easily come by, but now, (v. 4.) We have drunk our water for money, and the saying is no longer true, Usum communis aquarum—Water is free to all. So hardly did their oppressors use them, that they could not have a draught of fair water but they must purchase it either with money or with work! Formely they had fad too for the fetching; but now, "Our wood is sold to us, and we pay dear for every faggot," Now were they punished for employing their children to gather wood for fire, with which to bake cakes for the queen of heaven, Jer. vii. 18. They performed by force what was forbidden the use both of fire and water, according to the ancient form, Interdic tibi aquae et ignis—I forbid thee the use of water and fire. But what must they do for bread? Truly that was as hard to come by as any thing, for, (1.) Some of them sold their liberty for it; (v. 6.) We have given the hand to the Egyptians and to the Assyrians, have made the beast born of us serve us, to serve them, that we might be satisfied with bread. We were glad to submit to the meanest employment, upon the hardest terms, to get a sorry livelihood; we have yielded ourselves to be their vassals, have parted with all to them, as the Egyptians did to Pharaoh in the years of famine, that we might have something
6. All sorts of people, even they whose persons and characters were most inviolable, were abused and dishonour'd. (1.) The women were ravished, even the women in Zion, that holy mountain, v. 11. The committing of such abominable wickedness is very justly denounced, without any particular thing: (2.) The great men were not only put to shame, but to ignominious deaths; Princes were hanged, as if they had been slaves, by the hands of the Chaldeans, (v. 12.) who took a pride in doing this barbarous execution with their own hands. Some think that the dead bodies of the princes, after they were slain with the sword, were hung up, as the bodies of Saul's sons, in disgrace to them, and as it was to extenuate their own acts of injustice. The Chaldeans showed to magistrates, and those in authority; The faces of elders; elders in age, elders in office, were not honoured: this will be particularly remembered against the Chaldeans another day; (Isa. xlvi. 6.) Upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke. (4.) The tenderness of youth was no more considered than the gravity of old age; (v. 13.) They took the young men to grind at the hand-mills, nay, perhaps, they gave them a full burthen of yoke, and have carried the grist; so some; have carried the mill, or mill-stones, so others. They loaded them as if they had been beasts of burthen, and so broke their backs when they were young, and made the rest of their lives the more miserable. Nay, they made the little children carry their wood home for fuel, and laid such burthens upon them, that they fell down under them. So very inhuman were these cruel taskmasters.

7. An end was put to all their gladness, and their joy was quite extinguished; (v. 14.) The young men, who used to be disposed to mirth, have ceased from their music, have hung their harps upon the willow-trees. It does indeed well become old men to cease from their music, it is time to lay it by with a gracious contempt, when all the daughters of music are brought low: but it speaks some great calamity upon a people, when their young men are made to cease from it. It was so with the body of the people; (v. 15.) The joy of their heart was ceased, they never knew what joy was since the enemy came in upon them like a flood, for ever since deep called unto deep, and one wave flowed in upon the neck of another, so that they were quite overset and swallowed up. They were so much used to stand in hope, or in the expectation of help, instead of leaping for joy, as formerly, we sink and lie down in sorrow. This may refer especially to the joy of their solemn feasts, and the dancing used in them, (Judg. xxxi. 21.) which was not only modest, but sacred dancing; this was turned into mourning, which was doubled on their festival days, in remembrance of their former pleasant things.

8. An end was put to all their glory. (1.) The public administration of justice was their glory, but that was gone; The elder have ceased from the gate; (v. 14.) The course of justice, which used to run down like a river, is now stopped; the courts of justice, which used to be kept with so much solemnity, are put down; for the judges are slain, or carried captives. (2.) The royal dignity was their glory, but that also was gone; The crown is fallen from our heads, if we have sinned; it is fallen from our hands, if we have been just. (3.) Their city, their temple, their churches, are filled with the dead bodies of those who were killed, and then are laid in the graves: hence we read of the reproach of fishermen, which in captivity they received among the heathen, Ezek. xxxvi. 30.
is righteous, for we have sinned." Note, All our
ways are owing to our own sin and folly. If the
crown of our head be fallen, (for so the words run,) if we lose our excellency, and become mean, we
may thank ourselves, we have by our own iniquity
profaned our crown, and laid our honour in the dust.
17. For this our heart is faint; for these
things our eyes are dim. 18. Because of the
mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes
walk upon it. 19. Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever; thy throne from gen-
eration to generation. 20. Wherefore dost thou
forget us for ever, and forsake us so long time?
21. Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old. 22. But thou hast utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth against us.

Here, 1. The people of God express the deep con-
cern they had for the ruins of the temple, more
than for any other of their calamities; the interests
of God's house lay nearer their hearts than those
of their own; (v. 17, 18.) For this our heart is
faint, and sinks under the load of its own heaviness;
for these things our eyes are dim, and our sight is
gone, as is usual in a decliquium, or fainting fit; "It
is because of the mountain of Zion, which is de-
solate, the holy mountain, and the temple that
mountain. For other desolations our hearts
grieve, and our eyes weep; but for this our hearts
faint, and our eyes are dim." Note, Nothing lies
so heavy upon the spirits of good people as that
which threatens the ruin of religion, or weakens its
interests; and it is a comfort if we can appeal to
God, that that afflicts us more than any temporal
affliction; he would come to our relief if we call
the mountain of Zion with their sins, and therefore
God has justly made it desolate, to that degree, that the
foxes walk upon it, as freely and commonly as they
do in the woods. It is said indeed when the moun-
tain of Zion is become a portion for foxes; (Ps.
Ixxiii. 10.) but sin had first made it so, Ezek. xiii.
4.
2. They comfort themselves with the doctrine of
God's eternity, and that he is a God of grace and govern-
ment; (v. 19.) But thou, O Lord, remainest for ever.
This they are taught to do by that Psalm which is entitled, A Prayer of the afflicted, Ps. ci.
27. 28. When all our creature-comforts are re-
moved from us, and our hearts fail us, we may then
courage ourselves with the belief, (1.) Of God's
eternity; Thou remainest for ever. What shakes
the world gives no disturbance to him; and all changes
whatever revolutions there are on earth, there is no
change in the Eternal Mind; God is still the same,
and remains for ever infinitely wise and holy, just
and good; with him there is no variableness nor
shadow of turning. (2.) Of the never-falling con-
tinuance of his dominion; Thy throne is from gene-
eration to generation; the throne of glory, the throne
of grace, and the throne of judgment, are all un-
changeable; and this is matter of com-
fort to us when the crown is fallen from our head.
When the thrones of princes, that should be our
protectors, are brought to the dust, and buried in it,
God's throne continues still; he still rules the world,
and rules it for the good of his church. The Lord
reigns, reigns for ever, even thy God, O Zion; Ps.
Ixxx. 19. These are the words of the Rabbins, as
they are here represented by the prophet, to comfort
us, we are not forsaken of God, and therefore we
are not forsaken by God; when God's throne
continues, there is reason to hope our crown
may continue too.

3. They humbly expostulate with God concern-
ing the low condition they were now in. "Where-
doth thou forget us for ever, as if we were quite
deprived of the tokens of thy presence? Wherefore
dost thou defer our deliverance, as if thou hadst ut-
terly abandoned us? Thou art the same, and,
though the throne of thy sanctuary is demolished,
thy throne in heaven is unshaken. But wilt thou
not be the same to us?" Not as if they thought God
had forgotten and forsaken them, much less feared
his forsaking and forsaking them for ever; but thus
they express the value they had for his favour and
presence, which they thought it long that they were
deprived of the evidence and comfort of. The last
verse may be read as such an expostulation, and so
the margin reads it; "For wilt thou utterly reject us?
Will thou be perfectly wrathful with us; not only
not smile upon us, and remember us in mercy,
but thou wilt be against us, and the crown of thy
throne, not only not draw nigh to us, but cast us
out of thy presence, and forbid us to draw nigh unto
thee? How will this be reconciled with thy good-
ness and faithfulness, and the stability of thy cove-
nant?" We read it, "But thou hast rejected us;
thou hast given us cause to fear that thou hast.
Lord, how long shall we be in this temptation?"
Note, Though we may not quarrel with God, yet we
may plead with him; and though we may not con-
clude that he has cast us off, yet we may (with the
prophet, Jer. xii. 1.) humbly reason with him concern-
ing his judgments, especially the continuance of the
desolations of his sanctuary.
4. They earnestly pray to God for mercy and
grace; "Lord, do not reject us for ever, but turn
thou us to thee, that we may know thee. This is
the way of salvation; not these words are not put last,
yet the Rabbins, be-
cause they would not have the book to conclude
with these melancholy words, (v. 22.) repeat this
prayer again, that the sun may not set under a cloud,
and so make these the last words, both in writing
and reading this chapter. They here pray, (1.)
For converting grace, to prepare and qualify them
for the service of God, and to make them fit for the
presence of God, (2.) For merciful goodness, that
they might turn from their sins, and that they
might experience the mercy of God. This they
had complained that God had forsaken and forgotten
them, and then their prayer is not, Turn thou to us,
but, Turn us to thee; which implies an acknow-
ledgment that the cause of the distance was in them-
selves. God never leaves any till they first leave
him, nor stands afar off any longer than while
they stand afar off from him; if therefore he turn
them not, and no longer than he leaves them, he
quickly return them in a way of mercy. This
agrees with that repeated prayer, (Ps. lxxx. 3, 17.
19.) Turn us again, and then cause thy face to
shine. Turn us from our idols to thyself, by a sin-
cere repentance and reformation, and then we shall
be turned. This implies a further acknowledgment
of their own weakness and inability to turn them-
LAMENTATIONS, V. selves, and that it is in our nature a bent to backslide
from God, but no disposition to return to him till his
grace works in us both to will and to do. So neces-

sary is that grace, that we may truly say, Turn us,
or we shall not be turned, but shall wander end-
lessly; and so powerful and effectual is that grace,
that we may as truly say, Turn us, and we shall be
turned; for it is a day of power, almighty power,
in which God's people are made a nation, Ps. cx.
3. (2.) For restoring mercy; Turn us to thee, and then renew our days as of old, put us into
the same happy state that our ancestors were in long
ago, and that they continued long in; let it be with
us as it was at the first, and at the beginning, Isa.
1. 26. Note, If God by his grace renew our hearts,
in which God's people are made a nation, (Ps. cx.
3.) he shall renew our youth as the eagle, Ps. ev.
8. They that repent, and do their first works, shall reju-
vice, and recover their first comforts. God's mercies
to his people have been ever of old; (Ps. xxv. 6.) and therefore they may hope, even then when he seems
to have forsaken and forgotten them, that the mercy
which was from everlasting will be to everlasting.